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Feeling and the

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Filmed Body

Judy Garland and the Kinesics of Suffering

Any Judy Garland fan has probably heard that in the 1930s Louis B. Mayer habitually referred to his newly acquired adolescent star as "our little hunchback."[1] Her biographers tell us that Garland was afflicted with scoliosis, a hereditary curvature of the spine more common in women than in men, and that it gave her something of a "dowager's hump" by her teenage years. Any Garland fan—indeed anyone who pays attention to the lore of Hollywood stars—also knows that she had a perennial "weight problem," and that attempts to control it were partly responsible for her addiction to various narcotic drugs, the malign effects of which were implicated in her firing by M-G-M and her first suicide attempt in 1950 as well as her death in 1969, at the age of 47.

"The perceived and tangible body"—Judy Garland in *Summer Stock*

Richard Dyer has described the way in which the publicity surrounding the 1950 suicide attempt "made possible a reading of Garland as having a special relationship to suffering, ordinariness, normality," and that this included a "reading back" of her earlier films (she made her first in 1936, at the age of 14), as well as her recordings and biography, for what Dyer calls "signs of disturbance and neurosis."[2] By the time of *A Star Is Born* in 1954, Garland's performance style, Dyer suggests, incorporated "signs (not hard to find) of what we are pleased to label neurosis."[3] He points to the "lack of control" of several of her gestures and facial and mouth expressions, and the redundancy of "unpremeditated" gestures that have no practical function, such as brushing back a lock of hair where no hair exists. These signs served, in their ambiguity and apparent spontaneity, as markers of authenticity in Garland's performance in this and later films; they both refer outside the films to her offscreen image and are tied to "the authenticity of her capacity to sing," which can in turn be used to reinforce the authenticity of other aspects of her performance and persona.

For Dyer, then, the visibility of Garland's neurosis stems from audience awareness of her extratextual image and public biography, a widely available history known to be inflected by psychic pain. But, as I will explore in this essay, in the performance frame of the Hollywood musical Garland's filmed body exhibits signs that bespeak a suffering that is physical as well as psychic, and that does not depend on outside sources for its meaning—or not on the same outside sources. Had no one known, in other words, about her abused childhood, suicide attempts, bouts of depression, battles with drugs and alcohol, etc., I believe that Garland's star image would probably still have been labeled neurotic by 1954. In some sense this essay attempts to illuminate no more and no less than my own responses to Garland's embodied performance style, the shaping of her gestures and movements through space and time, because it has always suggested to me that she does indeed have a special, somatically apparent relationship to suffering.

Thus *not* under consideration are Garland's talents as a professional film actor or even as a singer. I am not interested here in how skillfully she inhabits fictional roles in narrative films, and her legendary singing voice will enter into my discussion only peripherally, in terms of its relationship to the physique required to produce it.[4] Instead of focusing on the "constant play of authenticating levels," as Dyer puts it, in Garland's singing or in performances as someone ostensibly other than herself, I want to consider authenticity on another level, as the way Garland's filmed body expresses its own suffering, its own resentment, its own anger (or, conversely, its own resistance and happiness) at what it is being asked to do and at certain of the meanings it is being asked to produce. In addition to being fictional narratives, the filmed records of Garland's body over time help to document what dance theorist Susan Leigh Foster calls the "encounter" between the "meat-and-bones" body and some of the "methods of cultivating the body—whole disciplines through which it is molded, shaped, transformed, and in essence created."[5] The particular encounters I focus on in Judy Garland's case are those between her meat-and-bones body and the idealized female star body on the one hand, and the specific dance performance techniques used in the generic American film musical on the other.

This work is also meant, therefore, to illuminate the usefulness of certain dance-based analytical theories of movement as tools with which to explore what Horst Ruthrof calls the "corporeal semantics" or "nonverbal semiosis" of an actor's body and its gestures and movements over a range of film texts.[6] In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler writes that she was unable "to fix bodies as simple objects of thought" because bodies cannot exist apart from the gendered and gendering discourses that produce "the domain of cultural intelligibility" that defines bodies and the thinking (and writing) about them in the first place.[7] Bodies are always already "written [upon]" rather than "writing," their materiality as well as their performativity produced discursively as "the effect of power, as power's most productive effect." Certainly the anecdotal biographies of many female stars are likely to contain a litany of the physical faults or limitations against which they struggled, and these limitations cannot be understood as anything other than "the effect of power." Susan Foster, however, complicates Butler's conclusions by pointing out that the ways that the body—any body—performs in time and space themselves call into existence the discursive frameworks in which the performances "make sense," and therefore these performances can engage, confront, and alter the meaning of those frameworks.[8]

Striking a balance between the body as agent and as product, then, Foster and her colleagues document performing bodies as "both active and reactive, generative and responsive, writing and written," the body's efforts amenable to analysis *as* interpellated manifestations of ideology, history, biology.[9] Another way to approach the materiality of bodies, in other words, is by interrogating their interaction with what Jane Desmond calls the "vast range of social practices built

on strictures of embodiment which form the tissue of everyday enactment" on both the "micro (physical) and macro (historical, ideological) levels," wherein the body serves "both as a ground for the inscription of meaning, a tool for its enactment, and a medium for its continual creation and re-creation."[10] Although clearly we cannot *speak* about the body except through linguistic discourse, Ruthrof reminds us that discursive meaning itself has "ultimately to do with the body" because "linguistic expressions mean anything or nothing at all unless they are activated by haptic, visual, tactile, gustatory, olfactory, and other non-verbal signs."[11] In short, bodies never *are* "simple objects of thought," but complex corporeal sources as well as manifestations of many levels of meaning. Writing about the body is therefore "intersemiotic," in that linguistic expressions whose meaning originates so often in the body's sensory interaction with its environments are used in turn to translate the represented and perceived body into words. The issue is not whether material analysis of the body should replace psychoanalysis in the study of ideology and its often repressive apparatuses of representation and spectatorship. Rather, I believe that attention paid to the represented body's gestures and movements helps us to understand some of the ways in which that body might convert and channel the physical price paid by its interactions with social practices and strictures of embodiment *into* what we are "pleased to label neurosis."

Elaine Scarry, for one, has pointed out in her work on the body in pain that in Western culture there is a fundamental difference in our ability, or rather inability, to represent, to express, and to comprehend physical pain (especially of others) as opposed to what she calls the routinely available "referential content" and "verbal objectification" of psychological suffering (on which art "consistently confers visibility").[12] Although Scarry tends to be thinking of organically produced or inflicted pain (through physical torture, for example), we now know that even what used to be called psychosomatic pain produces concretely felt physical suffering along the same neural pathways employed in more obviously imposed or organically generated trauma.[13] In the case of Judy Garland, therefore, we can begin to posit that her "signs of neurosis" not only might be related to physical suffering, but in fact could also be part of a continuum by which the feedback from one arena produces consequences in the other. Garland's filmed body produces meaning that my own body seems to feel and understand, but in order to write about the body's meanings, one first needs a vocabulary for describing and attending to embodied meanings as processes and as products. Effort-shape analysis provides such a vocabulary, and I will briefly characterize its basic tenets before employing it to discuss Garland's performing body.[14]

Effort-shape analysis was developed and has been used for decades by dance and movement therapists as a framework for observing and characterizing the lived body over time.[15] In its broadest sense, it means to describe, measure, and classify concrete, visible human processes—including musculoskeletal structure, gesture and posture, facial movements and expressions, foot-tapping and the like—as a complex of biological and social factors. Rather than attempting to determine the universal meaning of any gesture (which does not exist except in a few and very general cases relating to facial expression), effort-shape analysis pays attention to fluctuations of generic and idiosyncratic movements on a spatial and temporal continuum. Signally, such analysis is not concerned with whether a movement is authentic, spontaneous, conventional, or learned: rather, as one of its foremost practitioners, Irmgard Bartenieff, states, "Every movement in any part of the body reflects something of the mover and [has] an adaptive, coping function" and reflects a process of *habitual* adjustment to social conventions and demands upon the body and its capabilities.[16] "In theory," Bartenieff continues, "the effort-shape characteristics of one's movement are constant and pervade all of [that] movement, functional or expressive." Although I am only scratching the surface of its full complexity, I hope to show that its dependence upon careful observation over time; its assertion that an individual's movement patterns (or "action profile") remain the same regardless of the type of behavior observed (and it is often filmed movement that the effort-shape analyst works from); its acknowledgment of the importance of understanding the social conventions as well as biological dimensions constraining body type, posture, and gesture; and finally the relative modesty of its claims, make effort-shape analysis a useful tool for continuing the sorts of work that, for example, Virginia Wright Wexman began more than twenty years ago with her study of the "kinesics" of Humphrey Bogart's acting style.[17]

In describing how anyone moves, effort-shape analysis differentiates *gestural* movement (that which involves a single body part) from *postural* movement (that which spreads throughout the body, visibly affecting all parts of it and usually involving a weight shift). *Effort* is how kinetic energy is expended in space and time, and with what force; *shape* refers to the

sculpting and form of the movements themselves (not all movements are shaped; a hand raised limply is an effort without shape).[18] Since every movement is considered to be, as Bartenieff writes, "the product of inner states and outer stimuli," there are no "random" movements.[19] And since any shaping element may occur together with any effort element, there is an infinite number of combinations and sequences that can occur in movement—whether postural or gestural—and the job of the observer is to pay attention to the gesture-posture parameters and the "flow" of effort and shape together in an individual's movement patterns. For although expression is fantastically complex, it does appear to be possible, in Bartenieff's words, "to determine fluctuations of affect or feeling through movement, if careful attention is paid to the continuum of movement and not isolated patterns or gestures." Generally speaking, "greater selectivity and plasticity in movement allows for greater facility in expression and adaptation," but again, no single gesture "means" in isolation, no gesture is by definition "better" than another. While an individual whose postural and gestural movements are routinely segregated into stiff, isolated actions that are routinely "bound" (constricted) rather than "free" in space may be exhibiting signs of an "inability to cope" on both physical and psychic levels, this does not mean that individual failure or neurosis necessarily *causes* the movement problems. Often enough, the conclusion of the careful analyst is that it is the environment to which an individual is being asked to adapt that is itself impossibly rigid, harmful, or noxious, and in need of change or amelioration.

When one turns to the enormous amount of attention paid to Judy Garland's physique over the years, it requires no great leap to begin to consider her neuroses as linked to the failure of her "perceived and tangible" body, to employ Susan Foster's terms, to achieve an "aesthetic" ideal. Below, for example, is a rather lengthy but characteristic description of Garland's body as one of her biographers, Gerold Frank, conjectures it appeared to M-G-M when they hired her in the 1930s:

> Garland was short, plump; she had no neck. There was a slight curvature of the spine. . . .
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> [She] was one-half inch under five feet. Her legs were long but—as she was to quip, now ruefully, now bitterly—they seemed to be hitched to her shoulders. She was short proportionately from waist to shoulders; her neck was short. . . . There were other matters that would have to be dealt with. She had a bad bite. Her teeth were not bad, but out of alignment in front. . . . Her nose could be improved upon . . . little rubber disks would have to be inserted to bring that about. . . .
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> They would have trouble with her as she went into her adolescent years. They would have to bind her breasts to keep her no more than fourteen for the next few years, and later, to give her a shapely waist, squeeze her into a rigid "love corset"—a cruel harness of canvas and metal stays which required a woman on either side to pull the strings tight. The problem of streamlining Judy was to be compounded by still another unwelcome heritage [in addition to the scoliosis]. . . the tendency to put on all additional weight above the waist—which only exaggerated the top-heaviness of her figure, the more so because her legs remained remarkably slender.
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> For Judy this emphasis upon what she lacked was a source of extraordinary humiliation. From it grew, in those teen-age years, what was to amount almost to an obsession—the conviction that she was not physically attractive, not sexually desirable, to men. . . . A compulsive masochism did not let her forget it.[20]

One need hardly add that, given the obsessiveness of the cataloging of Garland's physical faults, and her well-documented sensitivity of temperament, it is unlikely that Garland would have been *allowed* to be anything but "compulsively masochistic" about her shortcomings. She was reminded of them at every turn (as we are by her biographers), and the "problem" of what Frank refers to as the "stubby, barrel-shaped teenager" over whom M-G-M's fashion department "groaned" became part of the Garland "action profile"—her "character armor," in Wilhelm Reich's words.[21] What Gerald Clarke, her most recent biographer, refers to as the "unfortunate proportions" of her "hard-to-fit body" was the subject of "intense scrutiny" by M-G-M, and her whole existence was colored by her physical shortcomings "from the moment she woke in the morning until the instant she fell asleep at night." Thus, Frank (again) imagines Garland standing with "tears running down her cheeks as two fitters laced her into a tight corset—the kind of heavy canvas foundation garment used by portly ladies. The two women, one on either side, pulled hard on the laces,

squeezing the girl tighter and tighter." Practically speaking, then, Garland's body was from the beginning manipulated *out* of its natural form because, as Frank writes, "It was the time of tall, slender, long-limbed American beauties."[22]

Of course, what made Garland attractive to M-G-M in the first place was not her body but her singing voice; yet comparatively rarely, and only in passing, do biographies note that Garland's stubby, barrel-shaped body was, as her singing coach Rogers Edens once pointed out, "the perfect anatomy for a singer." Because of the conventions of the playback system, Garland's voice was seldom actually produced by her screen body, a practice which, as is well known, obscures the labor that singing requires. In his history of the American film musical, Rick Altman refers to a "notorious American penchant for singers who sing effortlessly," but he then makes the curious rhetorical move of laying this "penchant" at the feet of the singers themselves who, "having left their physical efforts in the recording room, can act out the spiritual side of singing for the camera, and never let on that producing the sound cost them any effort."[23] That there were two largely antithetical regimes governing each musical star—one concerned with the production of the star voice, and another engaged with producing an idealized star body to mime that production—does not mean, however, that Garland or any other singing star was simply *choosing* to act out the "spiritual side of singing" (whatever that might be) in front of the camera. It is beyond the scope of this essay (and my expertise) to evaluate the changing contours of Garland's singing style over time, but I do want to emphasize the fact that becoming a female singing star in Hollywood required adherence to an amorphous concept of highly stylized perfection that had little to do with the production of *musical* entertainment. The signs of Garland's neurosis and pain not only appear in but are in no small measure caused by the struggles of her body and temperament to adapt to the demands made upon them over time by the visual conventions of women's stardom itself.

The filmed record of Garland's body is, of course, extensive, beginning with her first M-G-M short, "Every Sunday," in 1936 and continuing through her last televised concert appearances in the 1960s.[24] But little has been written about Garland's dancing style, much less about how dancing in the American film musical—with its frequently invoked utopian attributes of energy, freedom, joy, happiness—might have been rendered literally painful by the physical restrictions placed so firmly upon her body by what is in the end a limited and limiting ideology of female beauty and desirability.[25] I also suggest, however, that Garland's body becomes a paradox in this context, because its actual construction in bone, ligament, tendon, and muscle was also problematic because of certain of the conventions of the American film musical.[26] So first I will discuss Garland's dancing body in general terms, employing an analysis drawn from observation of all of her Hollywood film work. I then will concentrate in much more detail on individual moments from a couple of her most successful (in box-office terms) star vehicles—*Easter Parade* (1948), whose central plot conceit is that Garland's character *is* an "ugly duckling" who will be turned into a swan by being trained to dance by Fred Astaire, and *Summer Stock* (1950), with Gene Kelly, her last film for M-G-M and probably best known for its penultimate "Get Happy" number.

On the set: Making the body beautiful.

Generally, in all but a few of her dance numbers, Garland is not only bound in her action profile and posture-gesture merging by the relentless effects of what Gerald Clarke calls "M-G-M's bombardment of slights and insults," or by "love corsets," starvation diets, narcotics. Garland is also, in effort-shape terms, a "sagittal mover," or someone whose movements and gestures tend to take place in or be directed through

the "wheel plane" that bisects the body vertically from front to back. Most obviously, this is linked to Garland's skeletal structure. Whether stationary or in motion, for example, Garland is pigeon-toed (her feet point slightly inward toward one another or are parallel)—in part because her feet pronate (roll) inward, in part because she has very limited turn-out, in the lingo of dancers. Both the placement of the head of the femur in its socket in the pelvic girdle and the relative inelasticity of the tendons and ligaments in the hip joint itself give Garland's legs only a limited ability to move diagonally and openly through space, to sculpt in three dimensions. Combined with the shortness of her torso this means that, practically speaking, even as an adult Garland's locomotion style resembles that of a child because her torso and legs (like those of a child's body) tend characteristically to want to point in the same direction.

American theatrical dance, however, is frontal, deriving its particular style from the requirements of the proscenium stage.[27] By the beginning of the 1940s—precisely when the Golden Age of the American film musical began—it was also emphasizing the physical virtuosity and verticality of classical ballet. (Unfortunately for Garland, the aesthetic pretensions of "prestige studio" M-G-M meant that it, more than other studios, leaned toward the ballet-trained performer and ballet performance style even in apparently vernacular contexts like the folk musical.) The musical performer is supposed to face the audience, in this case the camera, and to present the body outwardly and frontally through emphasis on turn-out in the hips and legs. Classical ballet has so valorized turn-out in the lower body precisely because this so-called openness in the hips allows the upper body to remain frontal against the free locomotion of the legs. Enormous flexibility of the spine is required to keep the torso facing the audience even when the legs move the body diagonally, forwards, backwards, to the side, etc.

Joint flexibility, however, in contrast to muscle stretch and strength, is relatively fixed by heredity. There is nothing much that Garland, or indeed anyone, can do to overcome her nature as a sagittal mover (and it is partly why more of us are not professional ballet dancers). But what this means *visually* is that when Garland needs to perform a dance step in which the hips are open so that the legs can move freely, her gestures become "segregated" and isolated: her natural tendency would be to turn her entire body toward the direction she needs to move in, but turning away from the audience is not "allowed" by the conventions of theatrical dance. But nor can she keep her torso facing forward while her legs open out, because she is not physically built to do that.

In attempting to meet all of these requirements, the best Garland can do in many cases is an uneasy and painful approximation of the two: leaving her legs parallel and moving laterally (crabwise) to the side, for example, or turning her entire lower body in one direction while her upper body attempts to remain frontal. Her arms, perhaps as a result of how much mental effort she was exerting to coax her body into the required gesture-posture parameters, usually seem to move stiffly in and out of positions rather than flowing smoothly from one to the other. Her hand movements, even when they begin as open and strong, invariably become bound, as if she reaches a limit very quickly or as though she feels she has no right to comport herself so forcefully. Often, therefore, her hands are closed, or hang limp. So what I am suggesting is that, even in the absence of the literal constriction of her body by the demands of M-G-M's ideals of feminine beauty or public awareness of the stresses of her offscreen life, we probably would still have tended to describe Garland subjectively in terms invoking vulnerability, insecurity, incongruity, ambivalence. Although she always was remarkable, as critics were in the habit of pointing out from her earliest appearances in show business, for singing—for "belting"—with the voice of an adult, that voice emanated first *literally* from the body of a child, of course, but later figuratively from someone whose stance and physique continued to embody the childlike and, at least partly therefore, the ambiguously feminine.

Thus the paradox. Judy Garland did not conform to "normal" (that is, cultural and ideological) images of the adult feminine star body, and to "correct" this meant continual manipulation with heavy corsets and harnesses as well as dieting and the destruction of her ego through what Clarke calls M-G-M's "smug and unbending rules." Her body's own contours and "natural" posture and gesture combined with these constrictions in turn decreased the richness of her effort repertoire, and limited her ability to shape her gestures, to pattern her body's energy integrally into expressive as well as productive activity. Imagine, after all, employing the innate flexibility of your spine and opening your ribcage with deep breaths in order to propel a powerful and controlled yet "free" movement of the arms out and around in a three-dimensional "shape" that reaches towards the audience and that feels as good to perform as it does to watch. Then think about doing it in a rigid leather corset, or knowing that you are likely to be criticized afterwards for being a "tubby

barrel" or "fat and ugly." An effort-shape analysis of Garland's action profile in many of her films of the 1940s might therefore read as follows: Although on the surface she "is very lively and vivacious," there is a "repeated pattern, seen throughout her gestures and actions, of lightning quick starts followed by channeled, direct bound movements" that can be "interpreted as a kind of squelching of her energy and impulses." This is, in fact, what turned out to be a correct diagnosis of depression and suicidal behavior made solely on the basis of the observation over time of a woman's movement patterns by Irmgard Bartenieff in a clinical setting.[28]

Again, the goal of effort-shape analysis is not to say that anyone's physique or movement style are in any way "wrong" in some cosmic sense. Garland's body and its movements became problematic for her *only* in the context of the American film musical and the culture which valorizes it and Hollywood's ideals of female beauty more generally. Nor do I want to minimize Garland's skills as a performer, her frequently remarked-upon ability to pick up and execute difficult and intricate steps in spite of never having received much dance training. But what I do propose is that Garland's action profile in many musical numbers often indicates a measure of psychic and physical discomfort that I find quite horrifying (I will come to her post-studio career in a moment). Perhaps the best way to argue for the overall veracity of the analysis proposed above is to turn to a number in which Garland seems to be comparatively comfortable, and in which I find significantly less of the veneer of distress, the holding back, the discontinuity, the fractured movement quality I feel she habitually exhibits elsewhere.

"A Couple of Swells"—Fred Astaire and Judy Garland in *Easter Parade*

In "A Couple of Swells," from *Easter Parade*, Garland and Fred Astaire are both tramps dressed in ragged but once-elegant men's clothes. There are some six variably framed shots of the two singing and dancing which precede and follow the dance proper, while the dance itself unfolds as one take with both figures fully framed in medium long shot. Although the steps are not technically difficult (no pirouettes or rapid-fire rhythm tap, for instance), the staging is complex and would have required considerable attention to blocking. What strikes one immediately is how well, in this case, Garland's gesture and posture are merged—how smoothly actions flow in and out of one another, how large the shaping of her movements, how *complete* and integrated her hand motions are compared to other musical numbers (for example, "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'," "Ragtime Violin") in the same film.

It should not take much speculation here to understand some of the reasons for Garland's apparent ease. First, the clothing is loose and unconstricting, and the body's shape is neither emphasized nor bound literally by a corset. Garland is thus free to exploit the full range of her body's motion and can take pleasure in her skill, the feeling of the movement itself, or the interaction with her partner, rather than worrying about whether she is minimizing her physical "faults" sufficiently to avoid criticism. With the glamour stakes lowered as it were, Garland can dance more confidently, in greater tune with her body and its capabilities. One of the most interesting things about *Easter Parade*, of

Easter Parade: The ugly duckling performs for the critic.

course, is that its narrative works to turn Garland from an ugly duckling into a swan, a swan who appears to best advantage *as* a tramp. Yet in order to be seen as a *real* M-G-M swan (a movie star) Garland has again to be returned to corsets, disabling clothes, and the constant criticism mirrored repeatedly by dialogue directed toward her character ("Do something about your face—You look horrible!," "You just look as if you're in pain" ["I am," she replies], "A girl dancer has to be exotic, a peach" ["I guess I'm a lemon"], etc.), or subsequent dialogue that refers to Garland as someone at whom people "laugh" when she dances "all dirtied up, and with a man's clothes on" (and for whom the more ostensibly glamorous character played by Ann Miller can "feel really, really sorry").

Summer Stock also employs a plot based on turning Garland from an ordinary woman (in this case a farmer) into an entertainer, but it has another, more opprobrious link to *Easter Parade*: both were films Garland made following hospital or clinic stays that were the result of drug-related illness and severe depression. They are also both examples of how quickly the exigencies of profit-making overcame whatever good intentions the studio may have had toward maintaining the longterm health of one of its prime moneymakers (before *Summer Stock*, for example, M-G-M had promised Garland, who had made some 25 feature films for them between 1936 and 1949, a year off; but they called her back to work, despite pleas from her doctors, after 11 weeks). Ironically, some reviews of *Easter Parade* made note of Garland's "tenseness," and one New York critic even commented that "Judy, wan and frail, needs a little more flesh on her bones to give her more verve and bring her up to her old standard as an entertainer."[29] Yet when a robust, rested, and drug-free Garland appeared on the set of *Summer Stock* in late summer of 1949, the only thing that seemed to matter to the studio was precisely the fact that she was no longer "wan and frail."

All of the biographical accounts I have read subscribe overtly or implicitly to the notion that the difficulties with the shooting of *Summer Stock*, and finally the subsequent termination of Garland's contract with M-G-M, began as problems with Garland's body and what everyone involved, if not the public or journeyman critics, saw as its *excessive* flesh. According to these accounts, Garland's body simply could not be a star body as it was ("We tried to make her look as thin as possible," said costume designer Walter Plunkett, "but we weren't miracle workers").[30] Given their preoccupation with her size and physical appearance, the chagrin and alarm with which her coworkers and studio personnel "discovered" that, after several weeks, she was once more taking diet pills and that her confidence level had "dropped" demonstrate what today seems like an astonishing degree of self-delusion and complacency ("the more she tried to pull herself together," continues Plunkett, "the more hysterical she became. It was heartbreaking to see. She developed a hatred for herself and the way she looked which was quite alarming"). The double bind in which Garland found herself on *Summer Stock*—that one's actual health is less important than the conventionalized simulation of it by appearance—continues demon-

strably to plague our lives today, and deserves more close attention, but on different terms, than it has heretofore received.

It is quite a shock to see *Summer Stock* after reading accounts of its production, but not because of Garland's excessive weight. Rather, one is struck by how healthy her body looks at the beginning of the film, and how well she seems to feel in it. Again, as in "A Couple of Swells," Garland's movements while performing in overalls are for the most part loose and apparently unconstrained. The nervousness and bound gestures return as the film wears on and she becomes slimmer, of course (seems to have been shot more or less in sequence), and one is left to wonder what might have happened if the studio had allowed this "other" Garland to be a star, and in so doing to reconfigure the contours of the idealized star body, rather than insisting on the creation of a conventionally svelte shadow double. For *Summer Stock*, with its normal-sized Garland, was a box-office success—both audiences and the majority of critics, if not M-G-M itself, were apparently unfazed by the fact that Garland was only really thin in one number near the end of the film.

So thin is Garland in "Get Happy," in fact, that rumors emerged that it must have been filmed years earlier for another movie entirely. But it was merely added on after principal shooting on *Summer Stock* had been completed, when the studio decided that the film needed another Garland number at the end. Garland had gone off to lose weight for her next film—*Royal Wedding*, which she would never make—and according to one coworker, she

Summer Stock: The idealized star body reconfigured—Garland with Gene Kelly (above and below)

reappeared to shoot the number "in a manic state," thin and tired, "her breath reeking of paraldehyde."[31] Costumed in a man's tuxedo jacket and hat and black stockings and high heels, Garland is surrounded by a chorus of male dancers who also dance while she sings. Because there is no separate dance section and the bulk of the dancing movements is performed by the chorus, and because there are so many often unmatched shots of a variety of shot scales, it is difficult to read Garland's action profile in any detail. From the time I first saw it in the 1970s, however, this number has always provoked in me an ambivalent mixture of admiration and dismay, and especially when viewed on Technicolor film stock in theatrical presentation it seems amazing, given Garland's haggard face and the tension in her arms and hands, that anyone could have thought it was shot "earlier." All of the steps are performed perfectly competently within each shot, but there is about her performance what I read as a grim satisfaction or bravado, as though she knows now that she "looks right" (as well as sounds right) and that that is all that anyone really cares about.

It is thus more than curious that "Get Happy" has become an iconic Garland number, one described so often as revealing a "new Garland." While one can grant that it might have been "new," in one writer's words, because she was "never again to act the wistful child parts of former days," is this number *really* significant because in it she "showed us what a powerful entertainer she really was and what a beautiful pair of legs she possessed"?[32] Didn't we know already that Garland was a "powerful entertainer"? And is not the hale and healthy Garland of the rest of *Summer Stock* the real "new Garland," one whose like had seldom been seen before and was rarely seen thereafter?

After "Get Happy," it becomes impossible to read Garland's action profile except as an element of her awareness of herself *as* a "failed" star body, with this awareness therefore now part of her artistry—the term Wexman uses to describe Humphrey Bogart's understanding of the importance of gesture and physical expression in creating the "individuated character" in film—as a performer. Garland's post-studio film, television, and theatrical careers depended, in no small measure, on her being able to exploit her suffering self-consciously as such. She knew, in other words, that audiences *were* looking for Dyer's "signs of disturbance and neurosis," and she seems to have included several of the "markers of authenticity" Dyer catalogues in *A Star Is Born* in 1954 in her movement repertoire from then on in a much more calculated way.[33] Conversely, that the tramp costume became one of her favorites in her television and concert performances is not surprising, because it was one in which she felt good and could perform without worrying about her star looks (oxymorons like "iron-willed vulnerability" are frequently applied to her image at this stage in her career). In short, a significant component of Garland's star image *and* artistry as a performer developed out of the very "coping, adaptive strategies" she developed for succeeding in spite of what she was constantly told were her failures as a movie-star body.

Although I have argued that effort-shape analysis provides a useful codified structure for the particularized analysis of movement, other approaches to body-based theorizing have also been employed to consider what Iris Marion Young calls "female body comportment" from different points of view.[34] In her essay "Throwing Like a Girl," Young works to codify the "contradictory modalities" of feminine motility using terms taken from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty's "lived body," and her broad conclusions are not dissimilar from those likely to be reached employing the methodology of effort-shape analysis.[35] The "bodily self-reference" of feminine comportment generally, Young claims, derives from a woman's "experience of her body as a *thing* at the same time that she experiences it as a capacity." Consequently, the female body is often lived as a burden, something to be "dragged and prodded along and at the same time protected." It also tends to exhibit "*inhibited intentionality*," or a "discontinuous unity" between full bodily commitment toward a task (a sense that "I can") and the self-imposed fear of failure ("I cannot")—self-imposed, that is, through the gradual introjections of existing ideological attitudes (so clearly represented in Hollywood films) that women's motions are important only as they appear to others, not as they are felt in the doing.

Garland's performance style exhibits this dichotomy as well, and it is one reason, to be considered along with more or less ineffable qualities like talent or the power of her voice, why her films continue to fascinate. Although she is always in some sense performing for an audience, there are times when the immense pleasure that dancing and singing produce *for her* seems to predominate over the pain of being "unattractive, clumsy-looking," of being a "poor little ugly duckling—an ugly duckling surrounded by swans." This pleasure in itself helps to foreground the framework that defines the ugly duckling as such, and suggests that to alter the way we dress, occupy space,

and comport our bodies might be to alter the power structures that invest our bodies and their movements with the effects of that power.

After all, the spectacle of Garland's life and image resonates so powerfully still because of its mutability, the fact that her problems can be (and have been) allegorized relatively easily in a number of ways, each offering different "moral lessons." It is very easy to think of Garland as idiosyncratically crazy, an isolated case, representative of no real dilemma that matters anymore. But this is not true. Rather than being taken as a tale about an abnormally insecure and neurotic woman, or a remote object lesson about the evils of the old Hollywood studio system, drug addiction, or pushy stage mothers, the saga of Judy Garland perhaps *ought* to remind us that, in the end, stardom—the model for success in our culture—has very little to do with one's adherence to idealized standards (if it did, Bo Derek would be a bigger star than Garland).[36]

Since film images have been and continue to be the repositories for many, if not most, of our notions of what bodies are supposed to do and to look like, the relevance of a body-based theorizing—and of becoming infinitely more sensitive to bodies that are "like one's own"—for film and television studies seems substantial. Even if one starts from Judith Butler's proposition that the body's meaning is always discursively produced, this "constructed category," as Cynthia Novack puts it, still is "susceptible to analysis, [and] should be considered both from vantage points within the experiences of the actors in any given event and from the perspective(s) of the scholar."[37] In her work on the phenomenology of the spectatorship of nonfiction film, Vivian Sobchack argues that cinematic identification can, in fact, be constituted by the spectator's "recognition" of his or her own embodiment in moments of the experience of even a fiction film or television show.[38] Because of the way that this identification is "co-constitutive" of the film experience, I suggest that many film texts, as well as other forms of representation, are at least potentially "body genres"—they make the spectating body "do something," to use Linda Williams's appropriation of the term Carol Clover applies to the horror film—and deserve further work along the lines presented here.[39]

Moreover, "the body" is itself a theoretical designation still in need of refining and interrogation. To say that the body can be trained to perform, whether on micro or macro levels, does not go far enough—some parts of the body are more malleable than others—nor does the notion of performativity as discursively defined. Which parts of the body (are allowed to) speak and perform, and in what contexts? Which parts of the body repeat the discursive meaning already placed upon bodies by culture? What kinds of physical training and competence produce what effects? What if what is required *as* performance, or *in* performance—to look like a "tall, slender, long-limbed American beauty"—exceeds the corporeal reality of the body in question?[40] Only by learning to feel uncomfortable at the sight of *any* constrained, "imperfect" body being asked, much less encouraged, to deny its own shape—its muscles, ligaments, tendons, and skeletal structure—can we extricate the body from the tyranny of both idealized codes of gender and sexuality in an essentialist sense.

In the end, regardless of the character she was playing or what songs she was singing or whether and what she was dancing, Garland's neurotic star image can be read, at least partly, as a consequence of a physique and disposition at odds with the work they are asked to do and the insecurities and anxieties generated by "failure" to meet those demands. Over time, ambivalence and pain became a major component of Garland's star image, commuted famously into, in Dyer's words, "an emotional register of great intensity which seems to bespeak equally suffering and survival, vulnerability and strength, theatricality and authenticity, passion and irony."[41] As Judy Garland discovered, too often do the representational conventions—mass-mediated, mass-produced, commercially motivated—of commodity culture seem to be performing on our behalf, for us, and as us.

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Notes

1. Among the many Garland biographies in which this locution is repeated are Al DiOrio, Jr., *Little Girl Lost* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973); Gerold Frank, *Judy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); David Shipman, *Judy Garland: The Secret Life of an American Legend* (New York: Hyperion, 1992); Sheridan Morley and Ruth Leon, *Judy Garland: Beyond the Rainbow* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999); Gerald Clarke, *Get Happy: The Life of Judy Garland* (New York: Random House, 2000).
2. Richard Dyer, "Judy Garland and Gay Men," *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: BFI, 1986), 142-143; Richard Dyer, "*A Star Is Born* and the Construction of Authenticity," in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Stardom:*

Industry of Desire (London: Routledge, 1991), 137. Garland's earliest screen appearances, of course, were in variety shorts as the baby of the three singing and dancing Gumm sisters.

3. The quotations in this and subsequent sentences in this paragraph are from Dyer, "*A Star Is Born*," 137-139.
4. I agree that, as Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer point out in their recent anthology on film acting, much of the analysis of the acting carried out by the bodies we see in film has heretofore consisted of "discussions of a fictional character (whose creation is the work of a writer) rather than analyses of how that character is embodied (the work of an actor)." *Screen Acting* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 5. As they point out, there are several reasons, despite the importance of bodies and embodiment as the locations of narrative meaning and points of spectatorial identification in film, for the relative lack of attention paid to film acting over the past 30 years: the alliance in poststructuralist film theory of the body with generic psychic mechanisms such as voyeurism and fetishism; the feeling that technology intervenes between bodies and spectators such that our experience of the filmed body is rarely felt as physical or material; and, perhaps most pertinent, the lack of theoretical tools with which to explore embodied meaning. One of the notable exceptions to this lack of attention is, of course, James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988). Naremore only briefly mentions the "aleatory biological fact" (20) as an expressive element of performance, but his work and Virginia Wright Wexman's "Kinesics and Film Acting: Humphrey Bogart in *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*" (1978), in Jeremy G. Butler, ed., *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991) have long been inspirations to me.
5. Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," in Jane C. Desmond, ed., *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 235-236.
6. Horst Ruthrof, *Semantics and the Body: Meaning from Frege to the Postmodern* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). This dance-based theorizing takes a number of forms; in addition to the works on effort-shape analysis listed in note 15 below, see Janet Adshead, ed., *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice* (London: Dance Books, 1988); Cynthia J. Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Laurence Senelick, ed., *Gender in Performance: The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1992); Susan Leigh Foster, ed., *Choreographing History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995) and *Corporealities: Dancing, Knowledge, Culture and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Helen Thomas, *Dance, Modernity and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographics of Gender," *Signs* 24 No. 1 (Autumn 1998):1-33; and Jane C. Desmond, ed., *Meaning in Motion.*
7. Quotations in this and the following sentence from Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), ix, 2.
8. See especially Foster's discussion of Butler in "Choreographics of Gender."
9. Ibid., 17.
10. See Desmond's introduction to *Meaning in Motion,* 2, and also her essay "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies," 50.
11. Ruthrof, *Semantics and the Body,* 7.
12. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 11.
13. A summary of recent research on the physiology of pain can be found in Atul Gawande, "The Pain Perplex," *The New Yorker* (September 21, 1998), 86-94.
14. Richard Dyer also calls for further analysis of what he calls such "nonrepresentational signs" as gesture and body language in his "Entertainment and Utopia" (1977), in Rick Altman, ed., *Genre: The Musical* (London: BFI, 1981), 175-189.
15. It developed in the 1950s out of attempts by Rudolph Laban (1879-1958) to quantify, characterize, and record workers' movements in order to make them more "comfortable." Although another of Laban's underlying beliefs, that the physical movements of the body were direct reflections of psychological states, has become outmoded, the methods of observation he put into place continue to be used for more modest purposes, as a means of attending carefully to posture-gesture parameters in order to understand them in relation to social, ideological, historical, and material factors. The literature on effort-shape and movement analysis is enormous, but I found the most useful works to be Irmgard Bartenieff and Martha Ann Davis, "Effort-Shape Analysis of Movement: The Unity of Expression and Function" (1965), in *Research Approaches to Movement and Personality* (New York: Arno Press, 1972); Martha Davis, *Towards Understanding the Intrinsic in Body Movement* (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Cecily Dell, *A Primer for Movement Description Using Effort-Shape and Supplementary Concepts* (New York: Dance Notation Bureau, 1977); Irmgard Bartenieff, with Dori Lewis, *Body Movement: Coping with the Environment* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1980); Vera Maletic, *Body, Space, Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987); Helen Payne, ed., *Dance Movement Therapy: Theory and Practice* (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1992). The *American Journal of Dance Therapy* frequently features interesting if arcane articles. See also Desmond, "Embodying Difference."
16. This and subsequent quotations taken from Bartenieff and Davis, *Effort-Shape Analysis of Movement,* 17-27.
17. Wexman, "Kinesics and Film Acting."
18. The major elements of *effort* are space, force, and time; each of these can be delineated by its embodiment of dynamics such as indirect or direct movement through *space*; whether the *force* of a movement is light or strong; whether it occurs slowly or quickly in *time*. The three-dimensional sculpting of *shapes* in space typically are referred to by their relation to the movement planes, so that widening and narrowing characterize the *horizontal* plane, rising and sinking the *vertical,* and advancing and retreating the *sagittal* ("wheel") plane.

19. All quotations from Bartenieff in this paragraph are taken from Bartenieff and Davis, *Effort-Shape Analysis of Movement,* 1-51.
20. Frank, *Judy,* 72-73.
21. In Bartenieff and Davis, *Effort-Shape Analysis,* 3. All subsequent quotations about Garland are from Frank, *Judy,* 72-85, and Clarke, *Get Happy,* 74-75, 82-84, 133-134.
22. One might note here the typical use of terms that make Garland's plight seem long ago and far away, an unfortunate accident of history rather than of ideology. But of course we are *still* living in "the time" that Frank describes.
23. Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 151.
24. The prime evidence for my assertions, of course, is to be found in this filmed record, and in further comparative studies of Garland's performances with those of partners and other stars. Although the filmic techniques by which we are given access to Garland's (or anyone's) performances ultimately determine our ability to attend carefully to them and therefore need always to be considered as well, many of the M-G-M numbers I examined (notably those in which she performs with Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly) tend to privilege the integrity of the full-length dancing body with long takes, fluid camerawork that maintains the visibility of that body, cuts made on movement, minimal use of cutaways or inserts, etc.
25. On the musical as utopian, especially in the 1940s and early 1950s, see Altman, *The American Film Musical,* or Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia."
26. This would have been true, at least in these terms, for male performers too. Although Astaire and Kelly both wanted to be seen as vernacular dancers, Kelly especially used ballet technique as the underlying structure for all of his choreography and performance, even the tap routines. In the context of American cultural history, of course, the spectacle of the male dancing body has itself been seen as problematic and (or because) ambiguously gendered.
27. For more on the historical development of the frontality of theatrical dance and ballet, see Sarah R. Cohen, *Art, Dance, and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
28. In Davis, *Towards Understanding the Intrinsic in Body Movement,* 78.
29. Kate Cameron, *New York Daily News,* in Shipman, *Judy Garland,* 226.
30. This and subsequent quotation from Shipman, *Judy,* 246-247.
31. Ibid., 250.
32. DiOrio, *Little Girl Lost,* 97.
33. The very codification of her movement style by this point is one reason why it is the Judy Garland of this period who is most easily and frequently imitated, by drag queens, for example.
34. All quotations from Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality," in *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 141-159.
35. Again, what I believe effort-shape analysis provides for film studies is a reasonable method and language for observing, describing, and analyzing, in three dimensions and over time, the comportment in culture of what Susan Foster calls the "historical body" (Foster, *Choreographing History,* 5)—in this case analogical records of bodies in space and time and in contexts (e.g., generic, or in terms of the representational strategies of Hollywood cinema generally) that have been extraordinarily well elucidated on other levels.
36. Garland's place in popular culture continues to produce ironies. In early spring of 2001, ABC ran a hugely successful two-part miniseries about Garland, based on daughter Lorna Luft's memoirs, called *Life with Judy Garland: Me and My Shadows*. Not only did its first half consist largely of sequences in which Garland lamented the fact that she was "never going to be a success," but the many scenes of Garland's struggles with her addictions to diet pills were interlarded with ads for prescription weight-loss drugs ("Me and Meridia taking control!," "Ask your doctor about Xenical!"), diet supplements, and other paraphernalia associated with the failures of women's bodies. See "Judy Poppins," *Entertainment Weekly* (March 9, 2001), 16.
37. Cynthia J. Novack, "The Body's Endeavors as Cultural Practices," in Foster, *Choreographing History,* 183.
38. Vivian Sobchack, "Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfiction Film Experience," in Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov, eds., *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 252-253.
39. See Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" (1991), in Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Film Genre Reader II* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 140-158. It might be that I myself have a high or highly *trained* concentration of what researchers are now calling "mirror neurons," recently identified in regions of the brain, including Broca's area (associated with speech production), that fire not only when one performs a certain task but also when one watches someone *else* perform the same task. These neurons may play a pivotal role in understanding the intentions of others, and may also have provided an evolutionary bridge from "doing" to "communicating." For an overview of this research in layman's terms, see "Read My Mind," *New Scientist* (January 27, 2001), at <www.newscientist.com/features/features_22751.html>.
40. That ordinary people dressed in ordinary clothing can perform dance became a political issue in the 1960s and 1970s, when avant-garde dance pioneers like Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton called for a "heroism of the ordinary," the dismantling of elite and selective performance conventions in favor of dance movement performed "naturally" by "real" bodies. Ironically, several of the choreographers working in what is now called postmodern dance are also fascinated with popular entertainment and mass media; as this essay suggests, as an anti-elitist impulse this fascination may leave something to be desired. Perhaps not surprisingly, virtuosity and high degrees of ballet training are now also required of the professional postmodern dancer as well. See Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).
41. Dyer, "Judy Garland and Gay Men," 155.

David Bordwell

Intensified Continuity

Visual Style in Contemporary American Film

For many of us, today's popular American cinema is always fast, seldom cheap, and usually out of control. What comes to mind are endless remakes and sequels, gross-out comedies, overwhelming special effects, and gigantic explosions with the hero hurtling at the camera just ahead of a fireball. Today's movie, we like to say, plays out like its own coming attractions trailer. Picking up on these intuitions, some scholars suggest that U.S. studio filmmaking since 1960 or so has entered a "post-classical" period, one sharply different from the studio era.[1] They argue that the high-concept blockbuster, marketed in ever more diverse ways and appearing in many media platforms, has created a cinema of narrative incoherence and stylistic fragmentation.[2]

Yet these judgments aren't usually based upon scrutiny of the movies. Scholars who have analyzed a range of films have argued persuasively that in important respects, Hollywood storytelling hasn't fundamentally altered since the studio days.[3] If we examine visual style over the last 40 years, I think we're compelled to much the same conclusion. In representing space, time, and narrative relations (such as causal connections and parallels), today's films generally adhere to the principles of classical filmmaking. Exposition and character development are handled in much the ways they would have been before 1960. Flashbacks and ellipses continue to be momentarily teasing and retrospectively coherent. Credit sequences, openings, and montage sequences can display flashy, self-conscious technique. In particular, the ways in which today's films represent space overwhelmingly adhere to the premises of "classical continuity." Establishing and reestablishing shots situate the actors in the locale. An axis of action governs the actors' orientations and eyelines, and the shots, however different in angle, are taken from one side of that axis. The actors' movements are matched across cuts, and as the scene develops the shots get closer to the performers, carrying us to the heart of the drama.[4]

Still, there have been some significant stylistic changes over the last 40 years. The crucial technical devices aren't brand new—many go back to the silent cinema—but recently they've become very salient, and they've been blended into a fairly distinct style. Far from rejecting traditional continuity in the name of fragmentation and incoherence, the new style amounts to an *intensification* of established techniques. Intensified continuity is traditional continuity amped up, raised to a higher pitch of emphasis. It is the dominant style of American mass-audience films today.

Stylistic Tactics

Four tactics of camerawork and editing seem to me central to intensified continuity. Some have been remarked upon before, often by irritated critics, but most haven't been considered closely. Above all, we haven't sufficiently appreciated how these techniques work together to constitute a distinct set of choices.

1. More rapid editing

Everybody thinks that movies are being cut faster now, but how fast is fast? And faster compared to what?

Between 1930 and 1960, most Hollywood feature films, of whatever length, contained between 300 and 700 shots, so the average shot length (ASL) hovered around eight to eleven seconds. An A-feature would seldom boast an ASL of less than six seconds;[5] far more common were films with abnormally long takes.

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John Stahl's *Back Street* (1932) has an ASL of 19 seconds, while Otto Preminger's *Fallen Angel* (1945) averages 33 seconds per shot.

In the mid- and late 1960s, several American and British filmmakers were experimenting with faster cutting rates.[6] Many studio-released films of the period contain ASLs between six and eight seconds, and some have significantly shorter averages: *Goldfinger* (1964) at 4.0 seconds; *Mickey One* (1965) at 3.8; *The Wild Bunch* (1969) at 3.2; and *Head* (1968) at a remarkable 2.7 seconds. In the 1970s, when most films had ASLs between five and eight seconds, we find a significant number of still faster ones. As we'd expect, action films tended to be edited more briskly than other types (and Peckinpah's seem to have been cut fastest of all[7]), but musicals, dramas, romances, and comedies didn't necessarily favor long takes. *The Candidate* (1972), *Pete's Dragon* (1977), *Freaky Friday* (1977), *National Lampoon's Animal House* (1978), and *Hair* (1979) all have ASLs between 4.3 and 4.9 seconds. Midway through the decade, most films in any genre included at least a thousand shots.

In the 1980s the tempo continued to pick up, but the filmmaker's range of choice narrowed dramatically. Double-digit ASLs, still found during the 1970s, virtually vanished from mass-entertainment cinema. Most ordinary films had ASLs between five and seven seconds, and many films (e.g., *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* 1981; *Lethal Weapon,* 1987; *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?,* 1988) averaged between four and five seconds. We also find several ASLs in the three-to-four second range, mostly in movies influenced by music videos and in action pictures, such as *Pink Floyd: The Wall* (1982), *Streets of Fire* (1984), *Highlander* (1986), and *Top Gun* (1986).

At the close of the 1980s, many films boasted 1500 shots or more. There soon followed movies containing 2000-3000 shots, such as *JFK* (1991) and *The Last Boy Scout* (1991). By century's end, the 3000-4000 shot movie had arrived (*Armageddon,* 1998; *Any Given Sunday,* 1999). Many average shot lengths became astonishingly low. *The Crow* (1994), *U-Turn* (1997), and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) came in at 2.7 seconds; *El Mariachi* (1993), *Armageddon,* and *South Park* (1999) at 2.3 seconds; and *Dark City* (1998), the fastest-cut Hollywood film I've found, at 1.8 seconds. In 1999 and 2000, the ASL of a typical film in any genre was likely to run three to six seconds.[8]

Today, most films are cut more rapidly than at any other time in U.S. studio filmmaking. Indeed, editing rates may soon hit a wall; it's hard to imagine a feature-length narrative movie averaging less than 1.5 seconds per shot. Has rapid cutting therefore led to a "post-classical" breakdown of spatial continuity? Certainly, some action sequences are cut so fast (and staged so gracelessly) as to be incomprehensible.[9] Nonetheless, many fast-cut sequences do remain spatially coherent, as in the *Die Hard, Speed,* and *Lethal Weapon* movies. (The illegibility of some action scenes is partly traceable to misjudging what will read well on the big screen, as I'll suggest below.)

More important, no film is one long action sequence. Most scenes present conversations, and here fast cutting is applied principally to shot/reverse-shot exchanges. How else could *Ordinary People* (1980) attain an ASL of 6.1 seconds, *Ghost* (1991) one of 5.0 seconds, and *Almost Famous* (2000) one of 3.9 seconds? Editors tend to cut at every line and insert more reaction shots than we would find in the period 1930-1960.

Admittedly, by building dialogue scenes out of brief shots, the new style has become slightly more elliptical, utilizing fewer establishing shots and long-held two-shots. As Kuleshov and Pudovkin pointed out, classical continuity contains built-in redundancies: shot/reverse shots reiterate the information about character position given in the establishing shot, and so do eyelines and body orientation. For the sake of intensifying the dialogue exchange, filmmakers have omitted some of the redundancies provided by establishing shots. At the same time, though, fast-cut dialogue has reinforced premises of the 180-degree staging system. When shots are so short, when establishing shots are brief or postponed or nonexistent, the eyelines and angles in a dialogue must be even more unambiguous, and the axis of action must be strictly respected.

2. Bipolar extremes of lens lengths

From the 1910s to the 1940s, the normal lens used in feature filmmaking in the U.S. had a focal length of 50mm, or two inches. Longer lenses, from 100mm to 500mm or more, were commonly used for close-ups, particularly soft-focus ones, and for following swift action at a distance, such as animals in the wild. Shorter (wide-angle) lenses, commonly 25mm or 35mm, came into use when filmmakers wanted good focus in several planes or full shots of a cramped setting. During the 1930s, cinematographers increasingly relied on wide-angle lenses, a trend popularized by *Citizen Kane* (1941), and the normal lens was thereafter redefined as one of 35mm focal length. By the early 1970s, many anamorphic processes allowed filmmakers to use wide-angle lenses, and the lens's characteristic distorting effects (bulging on the frame edges, exaggeration of

1. *Jerry Maguire*: As Jerry, now fired, leaves his office, a telephoto lens provides an extreme long shot

2. . . . followed by a closer long shot, also filmed in telephoto.

distances between foreground and background) were flaunted in such influential Panavision films as *Carnal Knowledge* (1971) and *Chinatown* (1974).[10] Thereafter, filmmakers used wide-angle lenses to provide expansive establishing shots, medium shots with strong foreground/background interplay, and grotesque close-ups. Roman Polanski, the Coen brothers, Barry Sonnenfeld, and a few other filmmakers made wide-angle lenses the mainstay of their visual design.

Even more filmmakers turned to the long lens. Thanks to influential European films like *A Man and a Woman* (1966), the development of reflex viewing and telephoto[11] and zoom lenses, an influx of new directors from television and documentary, and other factors, directors began to use a great many more long-lens shots. Since the long lens magnifies fairly distant action, the camera can be quite far from the subject, and this proved advantageous in shooting exteriors on location. Even on interior sets, long lenses could save time, and multiple-camera shooting, becoming more popular in the 1970s, often required long lenses in order to keep cameras out of range of one another. The long lens could suggest either a documentary immediacy or a stylized flattening, making characters appear to walk or run in place (as in the famous shot of Benjamin racing to Elaine's wedding in *The Graduate,* 1967).[12]

The long-focus lens became and has remained an all-purpose tool, available to frame close-ups, medium shots, over-the-shoulder shots, and even establishing shots (Figs. 1-2). Altman, Milos Forman, and other directors might use long lenses for nearly every setup in a scene. The new lenses yielded several stylistic byproducts, such as the "wipe-by" cut.[13] Here a long-lens shot picks out a figure, and then something closer to the camera (traffic, a tree being dollied past) slides into view; cut as our view is completely masked; when the obtrusion leaves the frame, we have a closer framing of the figure (Figs. 3-5). Similarly, the long lens encouraged the self-conscious rack-focusing that came to prominence in the 1960s and that in more recent years has been orchestrated with figure movement to create shifting compositions in depth (Figs. 6-8).

From the 1960s onward, exploiting the extremes of lens lengths became a hallmark of intensified continuity. For *Bonnie and Clyde,* Arthur Penn used lenses from 9.8mm to 400mm (1967).[14] Several movie-brat directors appreciated the advantages of long lenses but also wanted to maintain the 1940s tradition of deep-space shooting. So Francis Ford Coppola, Brian De Palma, and Steven Spielberg freely mixed long-focus and wide-angle lenses within a single film.[15] Robert Richardson, interviewing for the job of cinematographer on Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986), recalls Stone asking, "I have only one question for you. Can you cut a long lens with a wide-angle lens?" Richardson thought, "Are you kidding? Of course you can. No problem."[16]

3. More close framings in dialogue scenes

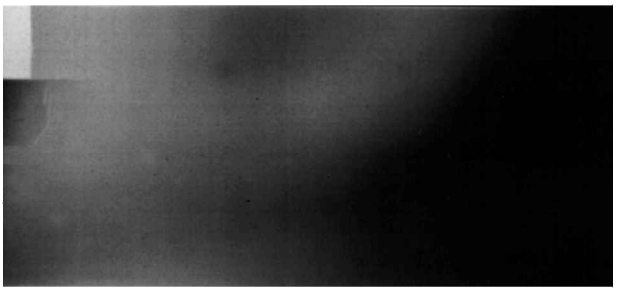
From the 1930s well into the 1960s, directors often played out stretches of scenes in a *plan américain,* which cut off actors at the knee or mid-thigh level. This framing allowed for lengthy two-shots favoring the players' bodies. After the 1960s, such two-shots were often replaced by "singles": medium shots or close-

ups showing only one player. Of course singles were also a common option during the studio years, but in recent decades filmmakers have been inclined to build scenes largely out of singles. Singles allow the director to vary the scene's pace in editing and to pick the best bits of each actor's performance.[17]

If a scene relies on rapidly cut singles, the filmmaker must find fresh ways to emphasize certain lines or facial reactions. The standard tactic is to differentiate shot scales, but again, post-1960s filmmakers faced a compressed range of options. The 1940s filmmaker could treat a single figure in *plan américain,* medium shot (waist-up), medium close-up (chest-up), standard close-up (full face), and extreme close-up (part of the face). As *plans américains* and ensemble framings became less common, the norms were re-weighted; in many films the baseline framing for a dialogue became a roomy over-the-shoulder medium shot. So the filmmaker began to work along a narrower scale, from medium two-shot to extreme close-up single.

When widescreen processes were introduced, filmmakers often felt obliged to rely on long shots and medium shots, but by the late 1960s, thanks partly to Panavison's sharper, less distorting lenses, directors could present closer widescreen framings. Indeed, the wide format gives close singles a real advantage: the tendency to place the actor's face off-center leaves a fair amount of the scene's locale visible, which lessens the need for establishing and reestablishing long shots. When actors change position, a reestablishing shot may not be needed: with tight framings, performer movement is often a matter of "clearing" a medium shot. (Actor A exits in the foreground, passing in front of B; hold on B for a moment before we cut to A arriving in

3. *Jaws*: In a telephoto shot, Chief Brody anxiously scans the surf.



4. A figure entering from screen right provides an "invisible" wipe-by cut

5. . . . revealing a closer view of Brody.

6. *LA Confidential*: In a long-lens two-shot, Exley tells his captain he'll break the suspects.

7. As he turns and pauses determinedly, we rack focus to him.

8. He exits, and a slight reframing downward discloses the skeptical Vincennes in the background.

another medium shot.) Now the long shot often serves to punctuate a scene, demarcating phases of the action or providing a visual beat which close-ups, because of their frequency, no longer muster.[18] Indeed, the scene's most distant framing may well come at the very end, as a caesura.

Most important, the pressure toward closer views has narrowed the expressive resources available to performers. In the studio years, a filmmaker would rely on the actor's whole body, but now actors are principally faces.[19] For Anthony Minghella, "dynamic blocking" means not choreographing several players in a wide view but letting one player step into close-up.[20] Mouths, brows, and eyes become the principal sources of information and emotion, and actors must scale their performances across varying degrees of intimate framings.

The faster cutting rate, the bipolar extremes of lens lengths, and the reliance on tight singles are the most pervasive features of intensified continuity: virtually every contemporary mainstream film will exhibit them. Although I've isolated these factors for ease of exposition, each tends to cooperate with the others. Tighter framings permit faster cutting. Long lenses pick out figures for rapid one-on-one editing. The rack-focus does within the shot what cutting does between shots: it reveals areas of interest successively (rather than simultaneously, as in the deep-focus classics of Welles and Wyler). All these options can in turn support a fourth technique.

4. A free-ranging camera

When we do find longer takes and fuller framings, the camera is usually in motion. Camera movement became a mainstay of popular cinema with the coming of sound, seen not only in the flamboyant tracking or crane shot which often opened the movie but also in those subtle reframings left and right which kept the characters centered. Today's camera movements are ostentatious extensions of the camera mobility generalized during the 1930s.

There is, for example, the prolonged following shot, where we track a character moving along a lengthy path. These virtuoso shots were developed in the 1920s, became prominent at the start of sound cinema (*The Threepenny Opera*, 1931; *Scarface*, 1932, and the like), and formed the stylistic signature of Ophuls and Kubrick. Bravura following shots became a fixed feature of the work of Scorsese, John Carpenter, De Palma, and other New Hollywood directors. Partly because of these influential figures, and thanks to lighter cameras and stabilizers like Steadicam, the shot pursuing one or two characters down corridors, through room after room, indoors and outdoors and back again, has become ubiquitous.[21] The same thing has happened with the crane shot, which formerly marked a film's dramatic high point but which now serves as casual embellishment. It enlivens montage sequences and expository moments: from a high angle, a scene opens with a car arriving, and then we crane down as someone gets out and walks to a building. "If somebody goes for a piss these days," Mike Figgis remarks, "it's usually a crane shot."[22]

Today's camera prowls even if nothing else budges.[23] Slowly or swiftly, the camera will track up to a player's face (the "push-in"). Push-ins not only underscore a moment of realization but also build continuous tension, as when a shot/reverse-shot passage is handled by intercutting two push-ins. The master shot will often be an inching track forward or sidewise, the "moving master." Or the camera may arc slowly around a single actor or a couple.[24] A common variant is to start a sequence with an arcing or sidelong movement past a foreground element, a building or car or tree, with the camera revealing the subject. Whereas a 1930s scene might open on a close-up of a significant object and track back, contemporary filmmakers begin with an inconsequential part of the set and, as if a curtain were pulled aside, the camera glides leftward or rightward to unmask the action.

By the mid-1990s, a very common way to present people gathered around any table—dinner table, card table, operating table—was by spiralling around them. The circling shots might be long takes (the sisters' luncheon in *Hannah and Her Sisters,* 1985) or brief shots (the diner opening of *Reservoir Dogs,* 1992). The arcing camera also became a clichéd means of showing lovers embracing (perhaps as a borrowing from *Vertigo*). De Palma gave the rotating clinch an overblown treatment in *Obsession* (1976),[25] and it was parodied in *Being There* (1979), when Chauncy Gardener learns how to kiss by watching a TV couple embracing in a florid 360-degree tracking shot.

As a figure of style, the free-ranging camera may have been popularized by the late 1970s horror films which implied that a hovering, slightly shaky camera might represent the monster's point of view. But the device certainly predates the horror cycle, since uneasily sidling shots can be found in *Bullitt* (1968), *Chinatown, The Long Goodbye* (1973), and *All the President's Men* (1976). Paul Schrader has even suggested that unmotivated camera movement, so prominent in European directors like Bertolucci, became the hallmark of his generation of U.S. directors.[26] Today,

everyone presumes that a long take, even a long shot, is unlikely to be a static one.

There is more to contemporary film style than these devices; a complete inventory would have to consider at least axial cut-ins, desaturated and monochromatic color schemes, slow motion, and handheld shooting. And not all filmmakers have assimilated the style in all respects. Like other *Star Wars* installments, *Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999) is cut quite fast,[27] but it avoids ultra-tight framings and the roaming camera. Baby-boomer Lucas sticks closer to mid-1960s stylistic norms than to those of *Armageddon* and *The Matrix* (1999). By contrast, M. Night Shamalyan employs today's framing techniques but keeps his shots unusually lengthy (18.2 seconds in *Unbreakable,* 2000). Nonetheless, taken as a cluster, these four techniques constitute prominent and pervasive features of the current style.

An International Baseline

The regularities I've plotted are fairly general; further research could refine our sense of how they developed. Evidently the style didn't crystallize all at once. Cutting accelerated during the 1960s, when the long lens and flagrant rack-focusing also became more common. The reliance on more singles, closer views, and wide-ranging camera movements seems to have developed in sporadic fashion during the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1980s, these techniques crystallized into the style of today, and successful films like *Superman* (1978), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Body Heat* (1981), and *Tootsie* (1982) probably made it attractive. Intensified continuity came to be taken for granted in film-school curricula and handbooks. Daniel Arijon's *Grammar of the Film Language,* a manual which professional directors sometimes consult in planning a scene, is virtually a compendium of the emerging staging and cutting styles.[28] Later manuals incorporate instructions on sidewinding camera movements.[29]

Seen from another angle, though, the intensified approach has an ancestry stretching back several decades. A late silent film like *Beggars of Life* (1928) looks much like today's movies: rapid cutting, dialogue played in tight singles, free-ranging camera movements. Kuleshov and Pudovkin, with their insistence on suppressing establishing shots in favor of facial close-ups, in effect promoted an early version of intensified continuity,[30] and today's wilder tracking and panning shots recall those of Abel Gance (*Napoleon,* 1927) and Marcel L'Herbier (*L'Argent,* 1928). When sound came in, bulky cameras and recording equipment discouraged fast cutting and flexible camera movements. With the camera so difficult to move, even just to change setups, directors were inclined to capture the scene in longish takes. This habit remained in place for decades. In the 1960s, it seems, popular filmmaking began to recover some of the fluidity and pace of silent movies.

I've concentrated on mass-market cinema, but films outside the mainstream don't necessarily reject intensified continuity. In most respects, Allison Anders, Alan Rudolph, John Sayles, David Cronenberg, and other U.S. independents subscribe to the style. The major distinguishing mark of off-Hollywood directors is greater average shot length. Quentin Tarantino, Hal Hartley, and Whit Stillman typically work with ASLs of eight to twelve seconds, while Billy Bob Thornton's *Sling Blade* (1996) has a remarkable ASL of 23.3 seconds. Long takes aren't too surprising in the lower-budget sector; apart from an aesthetic commitment to centering on the performances, directors who plan long takes carefully can shoot quickly and cheaply. Interestingly, though, when an independent goes mainstream, the cutting is likely to accelerate. Jim Jarmusch moved from the one-take scenes of *Stranger than Paradise* (1984) to steadily shorter ASLs (*Mystery Train,* 1989: 23 seconds; *Night on Earth,* 1991: 11.3 seconds; *Dead Man,* 1995: 8.2 seconds; *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai,* 1999: 6.8 seconds).

Many movies made outside North America use the same expressive tactics I've highlighted. Werner Herzog (*Aguirre: The Wrath of God,* 1972), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (e.g., *Chinese Roulette,* 1976; *Veronika Voss,* 1982), and *cinéma du look* directors like Jean-Jacques Beineix (*Diva,* 1981) and Léos Carax (*Mauvais Sang,* 1986) employed intensified continuity devices as they were emerging in Hollywood. The techniques can be found in Luc Besson's *La Femme Nikita* (1990), Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady* (1996), Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* (1998), and several of Neil Jordan's films. More broadly, intensified continuity has become a touchstone for the popular cinema of other countries. The new style was a boon for marginal filmmaking nations; close-ups, fast cutting, sinuous handheld camera moves, long lenses on location, and scenes built out of singles were friendly to small budgets. In Hong Kong during the 1980s, John Woo and Tsui Hark reworked Western norms, creating a flamboyant style that amounts to an intensification of an intensification.[31] In 1999 a mass-market film from Thailand (*Nang Nak*), Korea (*Shiri*; *Tell Me Something*), Japan (*Monday*), or England (*Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*) was likely to display all the marks of intensified continuity. It is now the baseline

style for both international mass-market cinema and a sizable fraction of exportable "art cinema."

Some Likely Sources

What created this stylistic change? We might be tempted to look to broad cultural developments. Perhaps audiences trained on television, computer games, and the Internet can absorb rapidly cut movies more easily than earlier generations? Yet there remains the fact that during the silent era viewers were perfectly able to assimilate ASLs of four seconds or less. As often happens, we can find the most proximate and plausible causes in new technology, craft practices, and institutional circumstances.

Some aspects of the new style stem from the perceived demands of television presentation. Cinematographer Phil Méheux remarks:

> It's a shame that most films rely so much on tight close-ups all the time, filling the screen with an actor's head like you might for television, when there is so much more than you can show. The style is really just a result of what producers want for video release.[32]

The belief that television favors medium shots and close-ups has been a commonplace in industry discourse for decades.[33] One could add that television, usually watched in a distracting environment, needs to hold the viewer's attention by a constantly changing visual display—if not cuts, then camera movements. A 1968 TV production manual recommends that a director should seek out "animated visuals": "Can you dolly in to contract and concentrate the interest? Dolly out to expand the field of interest? Pan from one part of the subject to another? Arc around it for a progressively changing view?"[34]

It's also significant that TV cutting accelerated over the same years that film cutting did. Before the 1960s, many filmed TV programs had ASLs of ten seconds or more, but in the decades since then I can find no ASLs averaging more than 7.5 seconds. Most programs fall in the five-seven second ASL range, and a few (1960s "Dragnet" episodes, "Moonlighting") run between three and five seconds. (Of course, TV commercials tend to be cut even faster: ASLs of 1-2 seconds are common for 15- and 30-second spots.) Perhaps cutting rates accelerated independently in the two media, but when in the 1960s studios began selling their post-1948 films to broadcast networks, filmmakers knew that all theatrical features would wind up on television, and this may have encouraged them to step up the cutting pace. Reciprocally, rapid editing in influential early 1960s films may have provided a model for television (particularly commercials and shows like "The Monkees" and "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In"), which in turn encouraged theatrical films to be cut faster.[35]

Television influenced the intensified style at other levels too. Film has long recruited directors trained in television, so we ought to expect stylistic carryovers.[36] Since the 1980s, flashy technique has made TV-proven directors attractive to film producers. "These guys," noted an agent, "are risky bets but they offer a higher stylistic yield."[37] Just as important, many new technologies have preformatted a theatrical film for television. Complex scenes are "previsualized" on video or digital software, and actors' auditions are videotaped.[38] The Steadicam's viewfinder is a video monitor. In the late 1970s, film crews began to rely on the video assist, which allows the director and cinematographer to rehearse scenes and watch a shot as it is being taken. The process yields an immediate readout of the scene, but video-assisted shots, lacking in detail and framed for the TV format, may favor loose compositions over precise ensemble staging.[39] Video-based editing, first on tape or laserdisc and now on computer, is another way to shape the image for television. Walter Murch notes that editors must gauge how faces will look on a small monitor:

> The determining factor for selecting a particular shot is frequently, "Can you register the expression in the actor's eyes?" If you can't, you will tend to use the next closer shot, even though the wider shot may be more than adequate when seen on the big screen.[40]

In sum, video-based production tools may have reinforced filmmakers' inclination to emphasize singles and closer views, which are more legible in video displays all along the line.[41]

As strong an influence as television was on intensified continuity, it is probably one of several. We shouldn't forget the example of prestigious filmmakers such as Welles and Hitchcock, whose works abound in the techniques that would coalesce into intensified continuity. In the 1960s and 1970s, Bergman and Cassavetes proved that tight close-ups looked fine in widescreen formats. Sergio Leone did the same, along with flaunting extreme lens lengths and soaring camera movements. Peckinpah and other 1960s directors showed that very fast editing was feasible, particularly if one were to alternate already-seen setups in ABACABC fashion. During the 1970s, Altman freely intercut "creeping zooms," prefigurations of the omni-

present push-ins of today.[42] Certain canonized films have probably had some influence too. The great set pieces of film history tend to consist of rapid-fire montages (the Odessa Steps sequence, the shower assault in *Psycho,* the opening and closing carnage of *The Wild Bunch*) or virtuoso following shots (the party scene in *Rules of the Game,* the ball in *The Magnificent Ambersons,* the opening of *Touch of Evil*).

The media's celebration of rapid cutting may have made filmmakers fear that static long takes were out of sync with the audience. In 1990 Scorsese reflected ruefully, "I guess the main thing that's happened in the past ten years is that the scenes have to be quicker and shorter. [*GoodFellas*] is sort of my version of MTV . . . but even that's old-fashioned."[43] Rapid cutting also seems to stem from producers' insistence that there be many alternative takes for postproduction adjustments. While A-list directors can argue that a flashy tracking shot can complete several script pages efficiently, there are many pressures toward multiplying choices in the editing room. Even independent producers demand coverage: Christine Vachon, for example, asks directors to shoot both master shots and closer views, agreeing with her editor's complaint that "inexperienced directors are often drawn to shooting important dramatic scenes in a single continuous take—a 'macho' style that leaves no way of changing pacing or helping unsteady performances."[44] (For an older view of the gendering of style, compare Orson Welles: "A long-playing full shot is what always separates the men from the boys."[45]) Against producers' advice, Steven Soderbergh initially shot the trunk scene in *Out of Sight* (1998) in a single take, but he learned his Kuleshovian lesson when he saw the preview audience's interest flag at that moment. "What I should have understood is that every time you cut away and came back, you bought so much, because the audience filled in the gap for you."[46]

Changing production practices also made intensified continuity a good solution to particular problems.[47] I've already mentioned how long lenses helped in shooting on location and suggesting a documentary look. As production schedules got shorter in the 1970s, directors began to film much more coverage, protecting one-take scenes with cutaways. The prowling shot was certainly facilitated by 1970s body-braced cameras like Panaflex, Steadicam, and Panaglide. The lightweight Louma crane and later airborne remote-controlled cameras such as SkyCam made swooping boom shots easy. Fast cutting was encouraged by tape-based editing in the early 1980s (used chiefly in music videos and the films influenced by them) and then by the arrival of digital editing systems. Cutting very brief shots on celluloid is labor-intensive and complicated, since trims only a few frames long can easily go astray. By cutting on computer, filmmakers can easily shave shots frame by frame, a process known as "frame-fucking."[48] Frame-fucking is one reason some action sequences don't read well on the big screen. After cutting the car chase from *The Rock* on computer, Michael Bay saw it projected, decided that it went by too fast, and had to "de-cut" it.[49] "We see faster rhythms everywhere," remarks Steven Cohan, who edited one of the first digitally cut features, *Lost in Yonkers* (1993), "which is at least partially due to the fact that we now have the tools to make that kind of editing easy."[50]

Shot scale, lens length, and editing pace were also probably affected by the demand for multiple-camera filming. From the early 1930s to the early 1960s, filmmakers usually worked with just one camera, retaking portions of the scene from different positions. Multiple-camera shooting was usually reserved for unrepeatable actions such as fires, collapsing buildings, or vehicles plunging off cliffs.[51] Influenced by Kurosawa,[52] 1960s directors like Penn and Peckinpah shot scenes of carnage with several cameras fitted with very long lenses. In the 1960s and 1970s, when location shooting and tight schedules required faster work, many directors began using multiple cameras to cover ordinary dialogue as well. For *The Formula* (1980), several of Marlon Brando's scenes were filmed with two cameras. "When you get someone like that earning big dollars by the day, there's a lot of pressure to finish scenes as quickly as possible. The second camera helped us do that."[53] As producers demanded more coverage, extra cameras provided it, which in turn made the editor more likely to assemble the scene out of singles taken from many angles. Happily, the new lighter cameras were more maneuverable in multi-camera situations. During the 1980s, the B camera was frequently a Steadicam, roaming the set for coverage, and the fluidity of its movements around static actors may have made circling shots and push-ins good candidates for inclusion in the final cut. By the time *Gladiator* (2000) was made, a dialogue would be filmed by as many as seven cameras, some of them Steadicams. "I was thinking," the director of photography explained, "'someone has got to be getting something good.'"[54] The search for "something good" at each instant, from a wide range of angles, will predispose filmmakers to cut often.

We could consider other causal factors, such as the influence of machine-gun coming-attractions trailers, but a particularly intriguing possibility is changing

exhibition circumstances. Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs have suggested that in the period 1908-1917, as cinema moved from vaudeville houses to dedicated venues, screens got smaller; in order to seem correspondingly larger, actors were filmed from closer positions.[55] William Paul has argued that similar exhibition pressures in the 1920s inclined filmmakers to use more close-ups.[56] With the twinning and plexing of the 1970s, screens shrank again, and perhaps filmmakers intuitively moved toward bigger faces, assuming as well that faster cutting would read adequately on smaller multiplex screens.

The Aesthetics of Intensified Continuity

All these circumstances warrant detailed inquiry, and they need to be integrated with an analysis of changing sound and color practices. But let the foregoing stand as a broad outline. What concerns me now are the consequences of the new style. What aesthetic possibilities does it open up or foreclose?

Contrary to claims that Hollywood style has become post-classical, we are still dealing with a variant of classical filmmaking. An analysis of virtually any film from the period I've picked out will confirm a simple truth: nearly all scenes in nearly all contemporary mass-market movies (and in most "independent" films) are staged, shot, and cut according to principles which crystallized in the 1910s and 1920s. Intensified continuity constitutes a selection and elaboration of options already on the classical filmmaking menu. Building a scene out of tight, rapidly cut singles was a strategy adopted by some B-filmmakers (e.g., James Tinling, for *Mr. Moto's Gamble,* 1938), as well as by Hitchcock. Autonomous camera movement was likewise an option, although it was traditionally reserved for moments of high drama, not perfunctory underscoring. The long lens had been used for close-ups since the 1920s, so it could be appropriated for other shot scales.

Granted, today we find some untraditional moments—incoherent action scenes, jump-cut montage sequences. Granted too, some moviemakers play more daringly on the fringes. Oliver Stone's post-*JFK* films are probably the most disjunctive made in Hollywood, intercutting color and black-and-white, replaying shots, inserting an occasional long shot crossing the axis of action. But Stone's aberrations stand out as such, momentary deviations from a still-powerful cluster of norms to which even he mostly adheres.

I don't, however, want to leave the impression that nothing has changed. Intensified continuity represents a significant shift within the history of moviemaking. Most evidently, the style aims to generate a keen moment-by-moment anticipation. Techniques which 1940s directors reserved for moments of shock and suspense are the stuff of normal scenes today. Close-ups and singles make the shots very legible. Rapid editing obliges the viewer to assemble discrete pieces of information, and it sets a commanding pace: look away and you might miss a key point. In the alternating close views, in the racking focus and the edgily drifting camera, the viewer is promised something significant, or at least new, at each instant. Television-friendly, the style tries to rivet the viewer to the screen.[57] Here is another reason to call it intensified continuity: even ordinary scenes are heightened to compel attention and sharpen emotional resonance.

One result is an aesthetic of broad but forceful effects, often showing strain but sometimes summoning up considerable power. The schemas of intensified continuity can be handled in rich and varied ways, as the films of Jonathan Demme, Spike Lee, David Lynch, John McTiernan, and Michael Mann illustrate. We have subdued, tasteful versions (Nora Ephron, Ron Howard, Frank Darabont, Anthony Minghella), more pumped-up ones (the Bruckheimer films), and even parodically delirious ones (Sam Raimi, the Coen brothers). Hong Kong directors have explored the style with particular acuity. Tony Leung Chiu-wai's abrupt entry into the Macau restaurant in Patrick Yau's *The Longest Nite* (1998) and the wineglass-breaking competition in Johnnie To's *A Hero Never Dies* (1998) make bold, precisely choreographed passages of intensified continuity mesmerizing. From another perspective, the premises of the intensified approach can be recast more ascetically. Hal Hartley, for instance, uses big close-ups and push-ins to create unexpected staging patterns. Todd Haynes' *Safe* (1995) heightens the artificiality of the style by injecting small doses of it into a texture that favors static long shots and slight, rather geometrical camera movements.

But every style excludes certain options, and intensified continuity has cut itself off from some resources of classical filmmaking. For one thing, as the range of likely shot lengths has narrowed, mainstream directors have been discouraged from making a two-hour film out of fewer than five hundred shots. It's not that he or she can't use a long take—indeed a couple of them seem de rigueur in every film—but a movie built primarily out of prolonged shots is very rare in today's Hollywood. (Significantly, *Unbreakable*'s long takes provided product differentiation for its publicity campaign.[58])

Further, by concentrating on camerawork and editing, practitioners of intensified continuity have neglected ensemble staging. Two staging options have come to dominate current practice. There's what filmmakers call "stand and deliver," where the actors settle into fairly fixed positions. Usually this is handled in singles and over-the-shoulder angles, but we may get instead the floating-head treatment, with the characters fixed in place and the camera drifting around them. In either case, if the characters shift to another part of the setting, their movement isn't usually aiming at expressive effect; it's a transition to another passage of stand-and-deliver. The alternative staging option is "walk-and-talk," with a Steadicam carrying us along as characters spit out exposition on the fly. Both stand-and-deliver and walk-and-talk were used in the studio years, of course, but so was complex blocking, as in Lang's and Preminger's delicately changing two-shots or Wyler's checkerboarding of figures in depth. Such blocking, however, has all but vanished from popular cinema. Perhaps only Woody Allen, with his avoidance of close-ups and his very long takes (an ASL of 22 seconds for *Manhattan,* 1979; 35.5 seconds for *Mighty Aphrodite,* 1995), offers an echo of this tradition.[59] "In the old days," a Hollywood agent remarked to me, "directors moved their actors. Now they move the camera."

With the loss of ensemble staging comes a greater constraint on actors' performances. The contemporary stress on close-ups is not that, say, of the Russian montage filmmakers, who filled their films with hands, feet, and props in dynamic relation to the actors. In intensified continuity, the face is privileged, especially the mouth and eyes. If hands are used, they are typically brought up toward the head, to be in that crucial medium shot or close-up. We lose what Charles Barr calls, in his fundamental essay on CinemaScope, *graded* emphasis.[60] Eyes have always been central to Hollywood cinema,[61] but usually they were accompanied by cues emanating from the body. Performers could express emotion through posture, stance, carriage, placement of arms, and even the angling of the feet. Actors knew how to rise from chairs without using their hands to leverage themselves, to pour drinks steadily for many seconds, to give away nervousness by letting a fingertip twitch. Physiques (beefed-up, semi-nude) are more frankly exposed than ever before, but they seldom acquire grace or emotional significance. In popular cinema, it's again the Hong Kong filmmakers who have best integrated intensified continuity with a respect for the kinesis and expressivity of human bodies.[62]

Finally, intensified continuity has endowed films with quite overt narration. Classical studio filmmaking was never wholly "transparent": figures in two-shots were usually slightly pivoted to the audience, and there were always passages (montage sequences, beginnings and endings of scenes, beginnings and endings of films) which acknowledged that the scene was addressing a spectator. Yet gestures which earlier filmmakers would have considered flagrantly self-conscious—arcing camera, big close-ups, the flourishes of a Welles or Hitchcock—have become default values in ordinary scenes and minor movies. Interestingly, this more outré technique doesn't prevent us from comprehending the story. Having become accustomed to a new overtness of narration, we seem to have set the threshold for obtrusiveness higher. And like earlier generations of spectators, we can appreciate displays of virtuosity—the legerdemain of wipe-by cuts, the soaring exhilaration of SkyCams. For such reasons, the new style suggests that we can't adequately describe the viewer's activity with spatial metaphors like "absorption" and "detachment." At any moment, stylistic tactics may come forward, but viewers remain in the grip of the action. The mannerism of today's cinema would seem to ask its spectators to take a high degree of narrational overtness for granted, to let a few familiar devices amplify each point, to revel in still more flamboyant displays of technique—all the while surrendering to the story's expressive undertow. It would not be the first time audiences have been asked to enjoy overt play with form without sacrificing depth of emotional appeal. Baroque music and Rococo architecture come to mind, as do Ozu and Mizoguchi. The triumph of intensified continuity reminds us that as styles change, so do viewing skills.

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Notes

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1. The idea of Hollywood "classicism" is presented at length in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

2. For example, several essays in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema,* ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), presuppose or argue for a post-classical Hollywood. See in particular Elizabeth Cowie, "Storytelling: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Classical Narrative," 178-190; Thomas Elsaesser, "Specularity and Engulfment: Francis Ford Coppola and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*," 191-208. Murray Smith offers some useful clarifications of the issue in "Theses on the Philosophy of Hollywood History" (3-20). A helpful overview of the position is Peter Kramer, "Post-classical Hollywood" in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies,* ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 289-309.
3. See Warren Buckland, "A Close Encounter with *Raiders of the Lost Ark*: Notes on Narrative Aspects of the Hollywood Blockbuster," in Neale and Smith, 166-177; Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 2-3, 344-352; and Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* (London: Tauris, 2000), 1-15.
4. Principles of continuity filmmaking are surveyed in David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction,* fifth ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 284-300.
5. The concept of average shot length derives from Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis,* second ed. (London: Starword, 1992), 142-147. All ASLs here are based on watching the entire film and dividing its running length, given in seconds, by the number of shots. Both images and intertitles are counted as shots, but production credits aren't.

   My estimates of studio-era norms are taken from Bordwell et al., *Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 60-63. Salt's results from the post-1960 period can be found on pp. 214-215, 236-240, and 249 of *Film Style and Technology*. Whereas Salt seeks to condense the average shot lengths of a period into a "Mean Average Shot Length," Bordwell et al. argue for thinking of ASLs as occupying a range of probable choice.

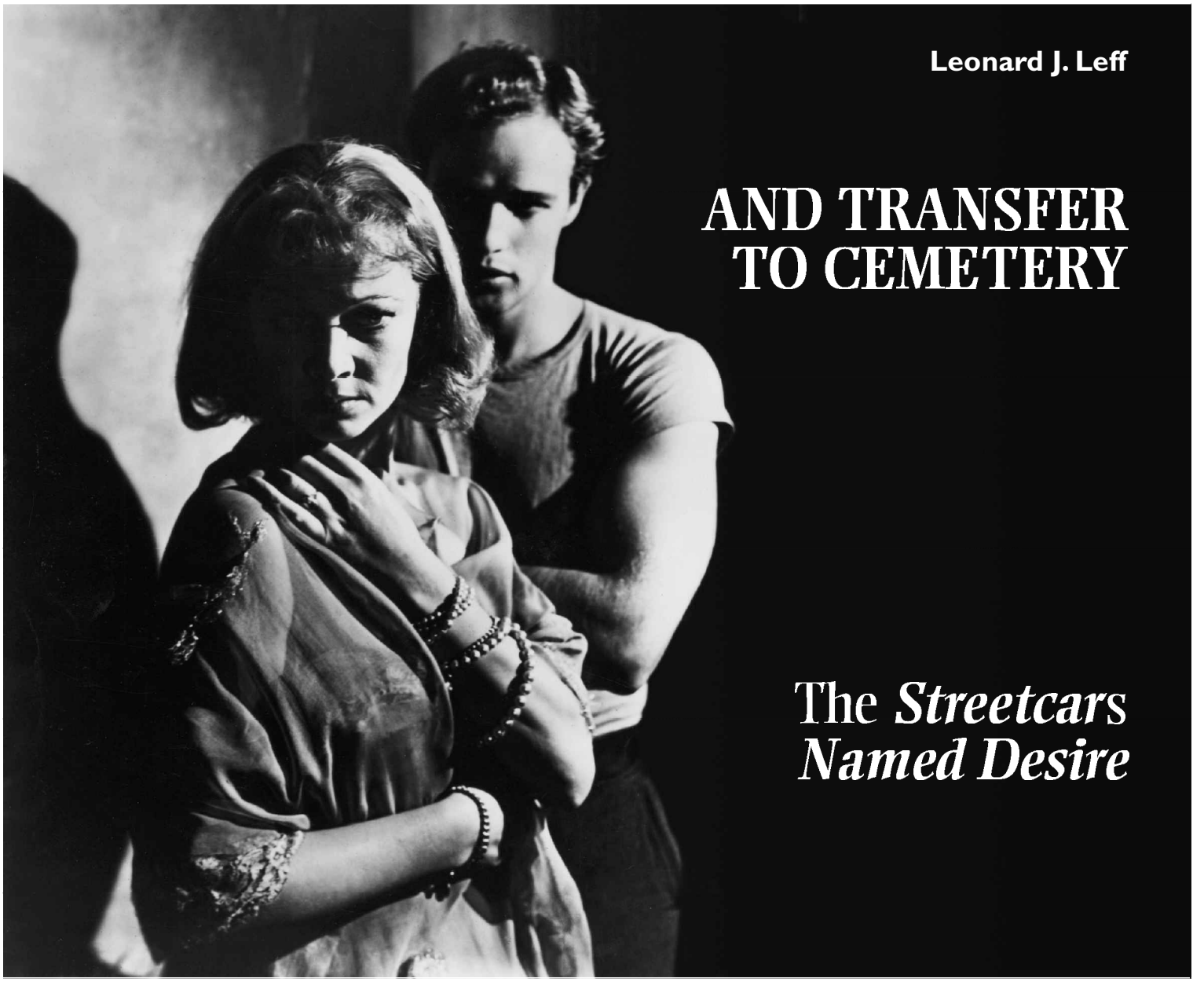
   More generally, ASL is a helpful but fairly blunt instrument. Naturally, a film with one long take and 800 short shots can have the same ASL as one with fewer but approximately equal shots. Other measures of central tendency, such as mode and median, would allow us to make finer distinctions, but measuring the length of each shot in a finished film is with present technology very arduous.
6. The rest of this essay draws its evidence from a corpus of 400 Anglophone films made or distributed by U.S. studios from the years 1961-2000. For each decade, I chose 100 films, with each year represented by 7-12 titles. The corpus was not the result of a random sample; strict random sampling is not feasible for a body of films because vagaries of preservation and canons of taste do not give every film made an equal chance of being studied. (See Bordwell et al., *Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 388-389.) I have tried to pick films from a wide range of genres and directors, though the sample is based on major releases and may not hold good for exploitation or straight-to-video titles.
7. For a detailed discussion of Peckinpah's rapid cutting, see Bernard F. Dukore, *Sam Peckinpah's Feature Films* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 77-150.
8. Barry Salt finds a shortening in Mean ASL from 11 seconds to about 7 seconds in the period from 1958 to 1975, and a lengthening to 8.4 seconds in the years 1976-1987, though he is more tentative about the latter results (*Film Style and Technology*, 265, 283, 296). My results roughly agree with his for the first period, but for the second I find little evidence of a tendency for shots to lengthen. I cannot explain the discrepancy fully, but two factors may be relevant. First, Salt's decision to seek a single Mean ASL, instead of a range of more and less likely options, may skew the result because a few very long-take films, such as Woody Allen's, can push the average up farther than a few very fast-cut films can push it down. If most films of the period come in at around six seconds, as Salt believes, a few films with 12-20-second ASLs will push the mean upward more than even many films with 2-4-second ASLs can depress it.

   Secondly, in the only publication in which Salt has explained his viewing procedures, he indicates that counting the shots during the first 30 to 40 minutes of a film yielded an adequate measure of ASL ("Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures," *Film Quarterly* 28, 1 [Fall 1974]: 14-15). In my experience, this isn't a trustworthy assumption for contemporary films, since a great many of them are cut significantly faster in the final stretches. The first 55 minutes of *Jaws* (1975) yield an ASL of 8.8 seconds, but the film as a whole has an ASL of 6.5 seconds. If we sampled only the first 35 minutes of *Body Snatchers* (1994), we'd find an ASL of 10.8 seconds, significantly high for the period, but the ASL of the entire film is 7.7 seconds. Many modern filmmakers seem deliberately to weight the first part with long takes in order to enhance a fast-cut climax. Perhaps, then, some of Salt's figures on 1976-1987 films derive from sampling only opening portions.
9. Todd McCarthy remarks that in *Armageddon* "director Bay's visual presentation is so frantic and chaotic that one often can't tell which ship or characters are being shown, or where things are in relation to one another" ("Noisy 26 'Armageddon' Plays 'Con' Game," *Variety* [29 June-12 July 1998]: 38).
10. See David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 238-244.
11. Telephoto lenses are long-focus lenses that have optically telescoped the lens elements so that they are physically shorter than their stated focal length. Thus a prime lens of 500mm length is physically longer than a telephoto lens of equal focal length. See Paul Wheeler, *Practical Cinematography* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2000), 28.
12. For more on this trend, see Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style,* 246-253.
13. Verna Field uses this term in Tony Macklin and Nik Pici, ed., *Voices from the Set: The Film Heritage Interviews* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2000), 243, where she discusses the shots in *Jaws* shown in Figs. 3-5.
14. John Belton, "The Bionic Eye: Zoom Esthetics," *Cineaste* 9, 1 (Winter 1980-81): 26.
15. For more discussion, see Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style,* 253-260.
16. James Riordan, *Stone: The Controversies, Excesses, and Exploits of a Radical Filmmaker* (New York: Hyperion, 1995), 154.
17. See Jon Boorstin, *Making Movies Work: Thinking Like a Filmmaker* (Los Angeles: Silman-James, 1990), 90-97.

18. "Dropping back to the master shot or even an establishing shot in the middle of a scene can let it breathe, or alternately can give it a beat that will then invest your close-ups with even greater force and intensity" (Paul Seydor, "Trims, Clips, and Selects: Notes from the Cutting Room," *The Perfect Vision* no. 26 [September/October 1999], 27).
19. Throughout *Secrets of Screen Acting* (New York: Routledge, 1994), Patrick Tucker assumes that film acting is facial. He advises actors on how to cheat their faces to the camera in tight shots, how to react in close-up, and how to speak in close-up (44-45, 55-57, 75). Blocking, he remarks, "is a way of getting the camera to see your face" (129). See also Steve Carlson, *Hitting Your Mark: What Every Actor Really Needs to Know on a Hollywood Set* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese, 1998), 23-47, 63-81.
20. Jay Holben, "Alter Ego," *American Cinematographer* 81, 1 (January 2000): 70.
21. For a discussion, see Jean-Pierre Geuens, "Visuality and Power: The Work of the Steadicam," *Film Quarterly* 47, 2 (Winter 1993-1994): 13-14. See also Serena Ferrara, *Steadicam: Techniques and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2001).
22. Quoted in Mike Figgis, ed., *Projections 10: Hollywood Film-makers on Film-making* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 108.
23. Several types of contemporary camera movements are discussed in Jeremy Vineyard, *Setting Up Your Shots: Great Camera Moves Every Filmmaker Should Know* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese, 2000), 35-50.
24. For *The End of the Affair* (1999), Neil Jordan sought to mark off flashbacks by having the camera circle the characters in one direction during a scene set in the past; the camera arcs in the opposite direction in present-time scenes. See David Heuring et al., "Impeccable Images," *American Cinematographer* 81, 6 (June 2000): 92, 94.
25. Nonetheless, the camera movements in *Obsession* look discreet by comparison with the extravagant arcs around the transgressing couple in *Body Double* (1984).
26. *Schrader on Schrader,* ed. Kevin Jackson (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 211.
27. *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) has an ASL of 3.4 seconds, quite short for the 1970s. *Episode V: The Return of the Jedi* (1983) has an ASL of 3.5 seconds, and *Episode I*: *The Phantom Menace* (1999) has an ASL of 3.8 seconds.
28. Arijon presumes, for instance, that the director will rely on tight close-ups; see *Grammar of the Film Language* (London: Focal Press, 1976), 112.
29. See, for example, Steven D. Katz, *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese, 1991), 300, 315.
30. Lev Kuleshov, "Art of the Cinema," in *Kuleshov on Film,* trans. and ed. Ronald Levaco (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 67-109; V. I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting,* trans. and ed. Ivor Montagu (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 87-109.
31. See David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 22-25, 162-168, and 224-245.
32. Quoted in David Williams, "Reintroducing Bond . . . James Bond," *American Cinematographer* 76, 12 (December 1995): 39.
33. See the comments gathered in Jack Kuney, *Take One: Television Directors on Directing* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 12, 29, 45, 46, 119. See also Frederick Y. Smith, "Rambling Thoughts of a Film Editor," *American Cinemeditor* 25, 2 (Summer 1975): 18-19. Richard Maltby offers a perceptive discussion of TV style and its influence on 1960s and 70s cinema in *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1983), 329-337.

    Despite practitioners' conceptions of the two media, we probably shouldn't see modern film as simply replicating TV style. With respect to shot scale, for instance, there wasn't and isn't just one televisual norm for film to match. Talk and game shows use long shots, while sitcoms and soaps rely on medium shots and *plans américains.* Video games are characteristically framed in long shot. Instead of blending the broadcast movie into the programming flow, filmmakers may have sought to create a distinct look for theatrical film *as seen on the box,* marking it with intense close-ups and flamboyant camera moves seldom found on other TV fare. (Still later, it seems, shows like "The X-Files" tried to look like a 1990s film as seen on TV.)
34. Colby Lewis, *The TV Director/Interpreter* (New York: Hastings House, 1968), 164.
35. An in-depth study of television techniques of the period I'm considering can be found in John Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
36. Critics of the 1960s often noted how TV-trained directors seemed to carry their habits over to feature films. An acerbic example is Pauline Kael's "The Making of *The Group*," in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), especially p. 100.
37. Quoted in John Brodie and Dan Cox, "New Pix a Vidiot's Delight," *Variety* (28 October-3 November 1996): 85.
38. On this practice, see the remarks in Jeremy Kagan, ed., *Directors Close Up* (Boston: Focal Press, 2000), 50-77.
39. Cinematographer Roger Deakins offers several comments on how composing shots on a video monitor yields less attention to detail in *Cinematography: Screencraft,* ed. Peter Ettedgui (Crans-Près-Céligny, Switzerland: Rotovision, 1998), 166.
40. Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing* (Los Angeles: Silman-James, 1995), 88.
41. Editor Paul Seydor notes that long shots and extreme long shots might not read well on home TV monitors, especially if they come at the end of a scene, where they could be mistaken for an establishing shot opening the next scene. Although Seydor prefers to retain such shots, he notes that many editors might not do so. See "Trims, Clips," 29.
42. See Paul Mazursky's comments in Figgis, *Projections 10,* 25.
43. Quoted in Peter Brunette, ed., *Martin Scorsese Interviews* (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi Press, 1999), 155.
44. James Lyon, quoted in Vachon and David Edelstein, *Shooting to Kill: How an Independent Producer Blasts Through the Barriers to Make Movies That Matter* (New York: Avon, 1998), 263.
45. Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich, *This Is Orson Welles* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 201.
46. Ann Thompson, "Steven Soderbergh," *Premiere* (December 2000): 65.

47. For information on some associated technological innovations, see Salt, *Film Style and Technology,* 251-296.
48. See Peter Bart, *The Gross: The Hits, the Flops—The Summer That Ate Hollywood* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), 232; David Kleiler, Jr. and Robert Moses, *You Stand There: Making Music Video* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1997), 168.
49. David Ansen and Ray Sawhill, "The New Jump Cut," *Newsweek* (2 September 1996): 66.
50. Quoted in Thomas A. Ohanian and Michael E. Phillips, *Digital Filmmaking: The Changing Art and Craft of Making Motion Pictures* (Boston: Focal Press, 1996), 177.
51. In the silent era, William C. deMille often used multiple cameras to preserve the continuity of performance. See Peter Milne, *Motion Picture Directing* (New York: Falk, 1922), 45-46. Much later, Richard Lester, transferring television practice to film, became noteworthy for using multiple cameras for dialogue scenes, from *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) onward (Andrew Yule, *Richard Lester and the Beatles* [New York: Primus, 1995], 14.
52. See Stephen Prince, *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998), 51-56.
53. Anonymous, "The Five Films Nominated for 'Best Cinematography' of 1980," *American Cinematographer* 62, 5 (May 1981): 503.
54. John Mathieson, quoted in Douglas Bankston, "Death or Glory," *American Cinematographer* 81, 5 (May 2000): 38.
55. Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 164-168.
56. William Paul, "Screening Space: Architecture, Technology, and the Motion Picture Screen," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 35, 1 (Winter 1996): 145-149.
57. Noël Carroll discusses how a constantly changing display maintains viewer attention in "The Power of Movies," in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 80-86, and "Film, Attention, and Communication," in *The Great Ideas Today* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1996), 16-24.
58. Benjamin Svetkey reports that 30 scenes in *Unbreakable* consist of single shots. "That's an astounding thing to have in a film," remarks Bruce Willis ("Fractured Fairy Tale," *Entertainment Weekly* [1 December 2000]: 38).
59. Allen explains that he seldom cuts within a scene because a sustained master is faster and cheaper to shoot, actors prefer it, and he doesn't have to worry about matching shots. See Douglas McGrath, "If You Knew Woody Like I Knew Woody," *New York Magazine* (17 October 1994): 44.
60. Charles Barr, "CinemaScope: Before and After," *Film Quarterly* 16, 4 (Summer 1963): 18-19.
61. See Janet Staiger, "The Eyes Are Really the Focus: Photoplay Acting and Film Form and Style," *Wide Angle* 6, 4 (1985): 14-23.
62. See Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong,* 200-245.



Leonard J. Leff

AND TRANSFER TO CEMETERY

The *Streetcars Named Desire*

Motion pictures, one of the plastic arts, have recently become more plastic than ever. Since the 1980s, archivists and studios have rearranged scenes in *Lawrence of Arabia,* deleted last-minute, potentially ill-chosen additions in *Blade Runner,* and, in the case of features like *Spartacus, Nights of Cabiria,* and *A Streetcar Named Desire,* restored what the censors had years ago barred.

Applause for such film restorations has been hearty, except in essays by Greg Solman, in *Film Comment,* and Russell Merritt, in *Film History*. Solman finds so-called director's cuts "both futile and wrongheaded." Footage added to *Spartacus,* for instance, restores "a bad scene in a generally uninteresting attempted epic," while footage added to *Lawrence of Arabia* "ruptures some of the better editing rhythms." As Solman concludes, the new eventually destroys the old. "Original versions soon will exist only in the fragments of our collective memory. Then, to quote the authority, 'All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain.'" Focusing on *Intolerance,* restored by the Museum of Modern Art, Merritt echoes Solman's point. Over time, he says, the Museum's incongruous version of Griffith's work will, thanks to the MoMA imprimatur, become the standard version of the film.

Merritt and Solman wrote their essays before the rerelease of *A Streetcar Named Desire,* the 1993 version

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that restores four scattered minutes of footage that Catholic censors in the Legion of Decency ordered cut from the picture before its original 1951 release. The two historians might well prefer 1951 to 1993, even as others among their peers, one suspects, prefer 1993 to 1951. The mere notion of preferences, however, evokes Hitchcock's story of the junkyard goats chewing on old film canisters: You know, one goat says to the other, the book was better than the picture, or, per *Streetcar,* the 1993 version was better than the 1951. Praising one version over the other misses an important point. What follows shows why.[1]

The story of the censorship of *A Streetcar Named Desire* has been told by director Elia Kazan, playwright Tennessee Williams, and assorted film historians. In light of publicity surrounding the 1993 rerelease, though, it merits retelling. After all, the 1993 rerelease is less the "Original Director's Version" (as it has been advertised) than the Production Code Administration cut, the one approved after negotiations between Warner Bros. and the industry's own censors.

The Production Code Administration (PCA) had fretted over *Streetcar* early on, even in screenplay form. Had the only controversial issue been the homosexuality of Blanche DuBois's husband, Kazan might have fought for—and won—a concession on it. Instead, hoping to soften the agency's resistance to the film, especially its treatment of the rape, he added a plot turn "which would effectively establish that [Blanche's husband's] problem was not one of homosexuality." (The 1993 version does not restore this thread. Note, too, that slipcases of the Warner Bros. laserdisc and DVD flag some—but not all—chapters that have new footage.) The Production Code office subsequently approved the rape—if done "by suggestion and delicacy" and if Stella abandoned Stanley rather than (as in the play) let him fiddle with her blouse and woo her anew. Stanley's "punishment"—the "loss of his wife's love"—answered Production Code director Joseph Breen's standard demand for what he called "compensating moral values."[2]

The press, having scolded Breen for denying *The Bicycle Thief* the Production Code seal, may have affected his treatment of *Streetcar*. He ordered cuts, certainly. They were tiny, however, and futile: Tennessee Williams had woven an erotic aura into the very fabric of the text. Kazan subsequently told Jack Warner and the press that the Production Code Administration "[let] us down very easy as far as the [Production Code] seal requirements went." Whatever the case, the cost of the PCA's forbearance was the arousal of local and Catholic censors. Memphis censor Lloyd Binford, for example, found "too much gambling" in *Streetcar*. Warner executive A. S. Howson was studio liaison to the municipal Board of Theatrical Censors, and by October 1951, when he thought he had finished his work on *Streetcar,* he learned that Binford wanted cuts. "I have gone over the picture thoroughly," Howson wrote to Warners' representative in Memphis, "(for the 1000th time, more or less) and find that it is impossible to reduce the gambling sequences."[3]

While Binford was a whisper in the Southern wilderness, the Legion of Decency was a church choir in full cry. "The Legion may have been willing to accept the view, as it had in the *Beyond the Forest* prologue, that 'it is salutary . . . to view . . . naked ugliness once in a while,' but it was unwilling to make a habit of it," Frank Walsh notes in *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry*. "From the moment the word 'DESIRE' is seen on the streetcar," said a Legion official on screening the *Streetcar* that Breen had approved, "the entire tone of the picture is 'desire' (physical desire)."[4] It hardly helped that Vivien Leigh (Blanche), in pronouncing the word *desire,* turned its two syllables into three: *de-sire-uh*.

The Legion told Warner Bros. that the Production Code cut of *Streetcar* would be rated "C" (for "Condemned"), which, as the studio understood, could block bookings in major theaters, especially in cities with heavy Catholic populations. On the other hand, the Legion added, if Warners made selected cuts and promised to release only the recut print throughout the world, the "C" would be exchanged for the more acceptable "B." Jack Warner ordered editor David Weisbart to recut the picture.

According to Michael Arick, who launched the 1993 rerelease of *Streetcar,* Weisbart anticipated an eventual restoration of the cuts; he took out the trims (Arick says) "in a way that made it easy for them to be put back in again." The delicacy of that operation notwithstanding, Kazan was incensed, or so he appeared in the column he wrote for the *New York Times* in 1951. In correspondence that surfaced in the Production Code files, however, he boasted to Jack Warner that any censorship, though bothersome, would also be "excellent publicity." More than 40 years later, as part of the promotion of the rerelease, the censorship of *Streetcar* remained excellent publicity.[5]

Most reviews of the rerelease (what Kenneth Turan called "the *Streetcar* for the ages") celebrated the no-

tion that an original should be tamper-proof, and that the truer the film to its director's vision, the better. The rerelease, in other words, was a praiseworthy restoration of the author's (or here, auteur's, meaning Kazan's) intentions. The rerelease, however, was a two-hour film of a three-hour play, the latter, one might assume, the real *Streetcar* for the ages. Not so, according to Laurence Olivier. When he staged the premiere of *Streetcar* in London, he cobbled together a script drawn from, he wrote Williams, "3 different scripts, or rather 2 scripts and a book." His version, almost an hour shorter than the three-hour Broadway "original," remained the standard British performance text until the 1970s. Defining an American standard, for performance and reading, has also posed problems. The Acting Edition of the play, published by Dramatists Play Service in 1953, differs in dialogue and scene descriptions from the New Directions "literary" editions, which differ not only from one another (Williams tinkered with the text over several editions) but also from the British editions.[6] Meanwhile, the search for the authorial intentions of "Tennessee Williams" in these various printings has an air of nostalgia, even decay: the author (according to Barthes) has died, and his work (according to Foucault) constitutes not literature but an "ideological product," nowhere better represented, one could argue, than in texts touched by censorship agencies.

It may be true, as Jerome S. McGann notes, that every text "enters the world under determinate sociohistorical conditions," meaning that (note the passive voice) "texts are produced under specific social and institutional conditions." It may also be true that the proper study of texts, say Shakespeare's, concentrates on textual collaborators—on scribes and playhouse managers no less than literary conventions and printing-house practices—in order to recover and explore the cultural conditions of "his" works' production and publication. Consumers nonetheless desire *the* text. Look, for instance, at reactions to the printed reconstruction of *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Few readers of Robert Carringer's gracefully edited 12 March 1942 cutting continuity can resist making odorous comparisons of it (Orson Welles's so-called master plan) and the truncated release print. In his review of Carringer's book, Robert Fyne quips that general audiences were ignorant of the longer version. "After all, what do audiences expect after plopping down the price of admission—some good old-fashioned Hollywood entertainment or a convoluted primer in post-production history?"[7] He's no doubt right. The rhetoric of either/or (as here) rather than both/and nonetheless obscures a crucial point about restorations and reconstructions. Apropos *Ambersons,* the rhetoric denies the fact that "unrestored" or "unreconstructed" works constitute an extraordinary X-ray of perceived audience tastes and studio fiscal and aesthetic policy in the period of their initial release. Perhaps more important, in a culture that equates "newer" and "better," it helps explain why restored versions of films like *A Streetcar Named Desire* tend to supplant, rather than enrich, the versions they succeed.

Literary scholars have challenged the notion of a hierarchy of texts; indeed, Paul Werstine, a proponent of texts as in-process works, maintains that editors have the responsibility to "display in book form for a wide audience the indeterminacy that characterizes Shakespeare textuality." Publishers have been cooperative. The 1997 Norton edition of Shakespeare, for example, prints three versions of *King Lear*—quarto, folio, and a composite—a practice that Donald Reiman calls "versioning" and that, in film studies, could reorient our perception of cinematic texts.[8]

"Versioning," or, to use W. W. Greg's phrase, the study of "rival substantive editions," invites us to see the two *Streetcar*s, 1951 and 1993, as mediated variations on source texts that are themselves (per the discussion of editions above) variations on the play. Placed side by side—and for the moment, *Streetcar*s "foul" and "original" still exist—these two texts not only speak to contemporary mores and censorship practices of the 1950s, they also shed new light on key aspects of the work's history as well as its interpretation as film, play, or literature. In short, to paraphrase Blanche DuBois, these paired *Streetcar*s, are "a little piece of Eternity dropped in [our] hands."[9]

Between the New Haven and Boston tryouts of *Streetcar* (the play) in November 1947, Williams told Kazan, "I know you're used to clearly stated themes, but this play should not be loaded one way or the other. Don't try to simplify things." Reviews suggest that the director preserved the complexity of the drama and its characters.

On Broadway, for instance, some (like the *Daily News*) found Blanche "a generous, loving accomodator [sic] of any yearning stranger who has been driven out." Others (like *Variety*) called her "a nymphomaniac, the explanation for her disintegration being that she had been married to a degenerate who committed suicide." *Life* added that her nymphomania brought on her rape. One photo of Jessica Tandy and Marlon

Brando showed her bent back over his arm. The caption read:

> "We've had this date with each other from the beginning," says Stanley to Blanche. For weeks she has been insulting and trying to attract him. When his wife is in the hospital having a baby, Blanche hysterically attacks him with the top of a broken bottle. In a half-drunken fury, Stanley rapes her.

According to *Life,* Blanche got what she deserved.[10]

Blanche may be both the "generous accommodator" and the "nymphomaniac." Jessica Tandy, though, was more the former than the latter. Her letter to Williams in November 1948 noted that theatergoers, affected by press accounts of the play along with its promotion as "sex in the raw," were turning Blanche into something she was not.

> Eight times a week and to progressively less sensitive audiences I have to try to make clear Blanche's intricate and complicated character – her background – her pathetic elegance – her indomitable will to survive – her innate tenderness and honesty – her untruthfulness or manipulation of the truth – her inevitable tragedy.

Kazan himself found Tandy's Blanche the "'womanly woman,' fragile and with a quality of helplessness, but underlying the feminine pliability, you sense her essential integrity." Robert Coleman, echoing Kazan's assessment, found Tandy "more British than Southern." Theater historian David Richard Jones says that her great type was "the high-toned Christian woman." The refinement and reticence no doubt appealed to the playwright, whose script says that Blanche was lonely and "suggests a moth." The elasticity of the text, however, allows an actress to oscillate along a continuum and hint at the "womanly woman" here, the debauchee there. In 1949, in London's West End, Vivien Leigh accentuated the carnal Blanche. ("The purpose of this play," the first sentence of the review in *The Times* read, "is to reveal a prostitute's past in her present.")[11] And now, the two versions of the Warner Bros. *Streetcar* not only contain traces of each interpretation but also remind us of the mutability of Williams' (or any dramatist's) play.

The 1951 cut mirrors what Kazan and Joe Breen had agreed to in principle, a more "high-toned" Blanche, whose desire would be a search "for romance and security, and not for gross sex."[12] In one scene, for instance, she's alone in the Kowalskis' flat, slumped

Vivien Leigh as Blanche DuBois

in a chair, when the young collector for the *Evening Star* appears. Attracted to his innocence, perhaps even his virginity, she says, "You make my mouth water!" She knows, too, she says, the sort of fountain drink he likes: "A cherry coke!" "Come here," she says. "I want to kiss you, just once, softly and sweetly." She does so, then says, "Run away now, quickly! Adios."

The 1993 version of the scene opens on a dissolve to Blanche. (The 1951 straight cut fails to adumbrate and reinforce the languor that follows.) She wipes her face, sighs, and moans, and then she arches her body and shifts her leg, actions that the 1951 version trims. Legion staffers knew masturbation when they saw it—even if Joe Breen had nodded, or was content to attribute Blanche's stirring to the discomfort of cheap furniture. Then the young collector appears. "I want to kiss you, just once, softly and sweetly *on your mouth*,"

she says. (The restored dialogue appears here and henceforth in italics.) "Run away now, quickly! *It would've been nice to keep you, but I've got to be good—and keep my hands off children*. Adios."

The 1951 scene reduces the taint of pedophilia and thus heightens the contrast between Blanche's gentility and Stanley's cruel destruction of it. The 1993 cut makes her less moth than flame. Her pelvic writhing in the chair, her confession that she wants the collector's mouth, and her admonition to herself—said with more irony than rue—evince her sexual adventurism. In one manuscript of the drama, she had made a naked play for the collector. "Well, well!" she cooed when he entered. "What can I do for *you*?"[13] The scene was eventually more subtle, though in its 1993 screen version Blanche yearns not "for romance and security" but for "cherry" young boys. She also shows more of the predator that Stanley sees in her. The invocation of the sexual and the neurotic, in other words, could lead some to reason that, as *Life* says, she participates in the rape.

The 1951 and 1993 texts, considered in tandem, hold a range of Blanches, and what was true for Blanche was equally true for Stella and Stanley. After the Kowalskis fight, Stella flees to her neighbor's flat until Stanley plants himself at the foot of the stairs and bellows for her. Descending the stairs in 1951, she responds to her husband's aching need for her, a point the music—and the cutting—appear to support. The strings play, poignantly, a long and ingratiating melody line that evokes tenderness and reconciliation. Kazan had wanted more ambivalence, which the Legion foreclosed when it removed the carefully orchestrated alternation of close and medium shots that, the director wrote in the *New York Times,* indicated "Stella's conflicting revulsion and attraction to her husband."[14] The

Kim Hunter and Marlon Brando as Stella and Stanley Kowalski

The cramped space of the Kowalskis' flat

close-ups on her, red hot in 1951, do show her attraction. Though they now look theatrical, more like a *performance* of arousal than a spontaneous evocation of it, they nonetheless demonstrate that she too knows how to start those "colored lights going again." The music reinforces the point; in 1993 a slender reed, apparently a clarinet, plays sinuously and flirts with the sort of bump-and-grind more closely associated with Bourbon Street than the residential enclave of Elysian Fields. Thus the two versions, paired, extend one's awareness of the richly ambiguous characterization: Stella responds in 1951 to her husband's need, and in 1993 she fosters that need.

The two versions also change Stanley. "My, but you have an impressive judicial air!" Blanche says during his interrogation of her. She sprays herself with her atomizer, then playfully sprays him with it. He holds his ground, and refuses, in 1951, to respond to her flirting. "All right," she says. "Cards on the table. I know I fib a good deal. . . . I keep my papers mostly in this tin box." Stanley sees Blanche more as interloper than as sexual object. His manner is brusque and his motive readable: he wants what's his, which an audience in 1951 could understand.

A photograph of Master Sergeant Kowalski ("decorated four times," Stella says) appears in the background of several shots. (Kazan's interest in "things" accorded the photograph a prominent role in the staged version.) The uniform connotes not only an aggression licensed by the state but also the past glory of a man now on the periphery of the postwar economic expansion. The working-class aura of the Quarter, the cramped space of the Kowalskis' flat (not to mention the cracks in the ceiling), and the fact that Stella has "glossed over" their living conditions in letters to Blanche all suggest that money's tight. Stella may believe (as she tells her sister) that Stanley's "the only one of his crowd that's likely to get anywhere." He has

not gotten there yet, though, and in the 1951 version of the film, to 1951 audiences, his hounding Blanche over money helps anchor the character and the work in the period.

During his interrogation of Blanche in 1993, Stanley seizes her atomizer and slams it down on the dresser; she throws back her head (as later she will do during the rape) and laughs, and then, only in 1993, they speak the italicized lines that follow:

> STANLEY: *You know, if I didn't know that you was my wife's sister, I would get ideas about you.*
>
> BLANCHE: *Such as what?*
>
> STANLEY: *Don't play so dumb. You know what.*
>
> BLANCHE: All right. Cards on the table. I know I fib a good deal. . . . I keep my papers mostly in this tin box.

Stanley's invocation of the incest taboo ("If I didn't know that you was my wife's sister") beckons the sexual urges it pretends to renounce. Blanche's response ("Such as what?") fuels the fire. A final clash becomes inevitable.

After Stella has gone to the hospital to deliver her baby, Stanley returns home and once more confronts his sister-in-law. He shuts the door to block her exit from the room but does not say in 1951, as he will in 1993, "Well, maybe you wouldn't be bad to interfere with. . . ." Absent that line (which the Legion deleted), the rape appears more spontaneous—brutal to be sure, though less the product of prior calculation than alcohol and opportunity. The restoration of the line makes Stanley's assault premeditated and thus especially violent.

The two Stanleys (one more untamed than the other) hark back to a fundamental aspect of Brando's theatrical performance: its refusal (rather like the play) to be "fixed." "I had seen [Brando's Stanley Kowalski] twice in the theater in 1947," Stanley Kauffmann wrote in 1993 on release of the restored picture, "and when the film first appeared, I rushed to make sure that it was there. It was; it is."[15] But *it* never existed.

On stage in 1947 and 1948, Brando demonstrated that a performance was not a performance was not a performance. Part of the proof lies in his opening night notices, which constitute a better record of his theatrical Stanley than do Kauffmann's recollections, colored, naturally, by the passage of time and the actor's subsequent fame. Like many others, Brooks Atkinson praised Brando. He said that the actor had unearthed the hunger, crudeness, and towering physicality of the character Blanche calls "Stanley Kowalski—survivor of the Stone Age!" He was "slow-witted, virile, [and] uncomprehending" (Ward Morehouse), a "violent and no-nonsense roughneck" (Louis Kronenberger), "an honest animal . . . blunt and passionate" (William Hawkins).[16]

That was one Stanley.

Toward the first anniversary of the Broadway run, Brando was showing more and more of Stanley's humor and humanity. He "sweetened his character," his biographer Peter Manso reports, and, according to Harold Clurman, conspired with the audience to humiliate Blanche and even Tandy, who entered psychotherapy to learn how to cope with her costar. Comparing Brando and Anthony Quinn, who played the role in 1949, Eric Bentley praised the latter for "[cutting] down the number of laughs that his lines can register, in order to be more loyal to the play's meaning." Meaning, or meaning*s*? The humor pointed the character one way, the brutishness another.[17]

Brando preferred theatrical impulse over rote performance; toward the end of the run, not unexpectedly, he got "horribly stagnated" (his phrase, in an interview with Howard Thompson). By the time he left the Broadway production in May 1949, he had been the "early" Stanley in 1947, the "late" Stanley in spring 1949, and probably many other Stanleys in between. And taken together, noting the differences between them rather than the superiority of one over another, the 1951 *and* 1993 *Streetcar*s not only represent the spirit of Brando and his portrayal of Stanley, but also offer us a salutary reminder of the instability of dramatic texts and (an allied point not explored herein) the fact that social and institutional forces affect actors no less than authors.[18]

One last point. In preproduction of the play, Kazan and Williams had worked and reworked the ending—the needs of Stanley and Stella, the dependence, the resentment, the loss, and withal the hope of a future together. The discussions of author and director laid bare Williams' ambivalence about the characters; more interesting here, that ambivalence finds expression in the (paired) 1951 and 1993 versions. Both cross-fade from Stanley attacking Blanche to water gushing from a hose, a startling image that anticipates the obligatory shot in a pornographic film. Also in both versions the Doctor and the Matron carry Blanche away. At the final curtain of the play, when Stanley kneels beside Stella and "his fingers find the opening of her blouse," it's at once an atonement, a reassertion of sexual energy, and, given what he has done, a second form of rape.[19] In both versions of the film, however, Stella and her baby fly up the stairs, just as she had done when Stanley had

hit her. Once before he had bellowed for her and she had come to him. Now, arguably, will be no different. Thanks to the absence or presence of the "ideas" and "interfere" lines, though, her returning to Stanley reads one way in 1951, another in 1993. She has, metaphorically, fewer steps to descend in 1951: Stanley raped Blanche because Stanley was Stanley, a human animal driven by instinct, exactly what Stella loves in her husband. In 1993, he contemplated the rape in reel one, and Stella's returning to him makes her betrayal of her sister even crueler.

"As soon as an author utters or writes down his work, even for the first time," notes Jerome McGann, "a mediation has to some degree come between or 'interfered with' the original, unmediated 'text.'"[20] *Streetcar,* like Blanche, was interfered with, and some would argue that the 1951 version, the last hurrah of a dying American institution, the Legion of Decency, should be allowed to fade away like an old snapshot. In fact, that has already begun to happen. Supposedly weak demand for *Streetcar* has led Warner Bros. to let 16mm prints of the 1951 version go out of circulation: no new negative (costing at least $25,000) and no more replacement prints (each $1,000) will be produced. By striking only 35mm prints for the restored *Streetcar,* the studio also placed it beyond the reach of the nontheatrical (16mm) market.

Continued enhancements of video projection and the video image may make the loss of the 16mm *Streetcar* appear less acute; meanwhile, however, *Streetcar* on video has its own problems. According to Bill Terry of Warner Bros. Video Business Affairs, *Streetcar* has never sold well, so, despite the low cost of video masters, the studio has kept only the 1993 "in print." (Warner Bros. sells the 1993, not the 1951, on DVD.) Once the 1951 laserdisc and VHS copies sell out, as they probably already have, the "old" *Streetcar* will be available only on Internet auction sites, film professors' shelves, and the racks of some video stores; once the machines that play them become obsolete, the 1951 discs and tapes will become coasters and paperweights.[21]

Like the disappearance of the "old" *Blade Runner* or the "old" *Wild Bunch,* the disappearance of the "old" *Streetcar* constitutes an erasure of history (and more) that in an ideal world of multiple textual editions would not occur: *Streetcar* 1951 would appear on commercial video alongside *Streetcar* 1993. In fact, some popular films have been released with an inadvertent attention to "versioning." Certain DVDs, like *Picnic,* include the widescreen version of the film on one side, the "flat" on the other; a rare case, comparable to the Norton *King Lear*, occurs on the DVD of Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*: on one side the American release print, on the other the British. (Bill Desowitz tracks some of the differences in "Strangers on Which Train?" *Film Comment,* May-June 1992, pp. 4-5.) The storage capacity and relatively low cost of DVD and CD-ROM software could make multiple hypertext "editions" economically viable. How far "down" or "across" should these exercises in studio archaeology go? Preview prints? Municipal censors' prints? Foreign prints? Yes, to these and more, for the value of multiple editions seems almost self-evident.

Multiple editions destabilize texts; they expose the myriad forces and collaborations that lie behind their production, and encourage readers to "create" their own versions. The *Streetcar*s show the way. *Streetcar* 1951 and *Streetcar* 1993, when paired, raise important questions about authorial intention and the cultural apparatus, in film, theater, and literature, that supports it. They also offer an entrée into the workings of style, censorship practices, and the tensile strength and curious tensions of an enduring American drama. Recalling the death of her husband, Blanche says, "And then the searchlight that had been turned on the world was turned off again." The loss of the 1951 *Streetcar* may prove no less momentous.

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Notes

Thanks to Edward Jones and Philip Kolin for their comments on early drafts of this piece.

1. Greg Solman, "Uncertain Glory," *Film Comment* (May-June 1993), pp. 19-27, and Russell Merritt, "D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*: Reconstructing an Unattainable Text," *Film History* 4 (1990): 337-75. See also Gary Crowdus and Alan Ferrand, "Restoring *Lawrence*: An Interview with Robert Harris," *Cineaste* 17, no. 2 (1989): 22-23, and Crowdus and Duncan Cooper, "Restoring *Spartacus*: An Interview with Robert Harris," *Cineaste* 18, no. 3 (1991): 28-29; *Hitchcock/Truffaut,* rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), p. 129. Distributors advertised *Lawrence of Arabia* as the "restored" version; Harris explains in the interview, however, why at least one scene—Allenby and Lawrence on the balcony—was not completely restored (23).
2. The Production Code Administration to Warner Bros., 28 April 1950, and Kazan to Warner, 19 October 1950,

reprinted in *Inside Warner Bros. 1935-1950,* ed. Rudy Behlmer (New York: Viking, 1985), pp. 323, 327. Philip C. Kolin, *Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), offers a well-documented summary and survey of scholarship of productions and criticism of the play and its adaptations. Archival production histories of Warner Bros.' *A Streetcar Named Desire* published since 1990 include Gregory Black, *The Catholic Crusade Against the Movies, 1940-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 109-15, and Leonard J. Leff and Jerold Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono,* second ed. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp. 167-89. On differences between the play and the 1951 film version, see Linda Costanzo Cahir, "The Artful Rerouting of *A Streetcar Named Desire*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 22 (1994): 72-77; on various aspects of censorship, see also R. Barton Palmer, "Hollywood in Crisis: Tennessee Williams and the Evolution of the Adult Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams,* ed. Matthew C. Roudané (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 204-31, and Nancy M. Tischler, "Sanitizing the Streetcar," *Louisiana Literature* 14 (Fall 1997): 48-56.

3. Kazan to Warner, 7 December 1950, and Howson to Frank Carter, 15 October 1951, *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* file, Warner Bros. Archive, Special Collections, University Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. The Memphis censor, born in 1866 and active until eight months before his death in 1956, was notorious in Hollywood and the South; in *Sanctuary* (New York: Modern Library, 1932), William Faulkner named a ferocious dog "Mr. Binford" (p. 175).
4. Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 245.
5. Michael Arick, quoted in Kenneth Turan, "A 'Streetcar' Named Entire," *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, 26 September 1993, p. 36; Elia Kazan, "Pressure Problem," *New York Times*, 21 October 1951, sec. II, p. 5; Kazan to Warner, 7 December 1950, A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE file, Warner Bros. Archive.
6. Turan, p. 36; Kolin, "Olivier to Williams: An Introduction," *Missouri Review* 13, no. 3 (1991): 152; George W. Crandell, *Tennessee Williams*: *A Descriptive Bibliography* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), pp. 41-55.
7. Jerome S. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 9, 21; Robert Fyne, review of Robert Carringer, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 14 (1994): 103-4.
8. Paul Werstine, "Editing after the End of Editing," *Shakespeare Studies* 24 (1996): 52; Donald Reiman, "'Versioning': The Presentation of Multiple Texts," in Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1987), pp. 169, 176.
9. W. W. Greg, "The Rationale of Copy-Text," *Collected Papers*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 386. Unless otherwise noted, citations of dialogue from *Streetcar* derive from the soundtracks of the 1951 and 1993 home-video versions.
10. Tennessee Williams, quoted in Kazan, *Elia Kazan: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. 346; John Chapman, "'Streetcar Named Desire' Sets Season's High in Acting, Writing," 4 December 1947, cited in *National Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947* (Woodside, N.Y.: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1940-1996), p. 249; "Bone," review of *A Streetcar Named Desire, Variety,* 10 December 1947, p. 68; "*A Streetcar Named Desire*," *Life,* 15 December 1947, p. 104.
11. Jessica Tandy to Williams, 2 November 1948, Audrey Wood Collection (24:13), Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (Mike Steen, *A Look at Tennessee Williams* [New York: Hawthorn, 1968], pp. 179-81, reprints Williams' and Tandy's correspondence); Kazan, quoted in Amy Porter, "Tandy Arrives on a Streetcar," *Collier's,* 17 April 1948, pp. 26-27; Robert Coleman, "'Desire Streetcar' [sic] in for Long Run," *Daily Mirror,* 4 December 1947, *National Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947,* p. 252; David Richard Jones, *Great Directors at Work: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), p. 181; Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire,* seventh printing (New York: New Directions, 1947), p. 11; review of *A Streetcar Named Desire, The Times* (London), 13 October 1949, p. 7.
12. Rudy Behlmer, p. 323.
13. Script fragment, *A Streetcar Named Desire,* n. d., Tennessee Williams Collection (44.5, pp. 5-72 – 5-75), Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.
14. Kazan, "Pressure Problem," p. 5; on Kazan and Williams, see Brenda Murphy, *Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan: A Collaboration in the Theatre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 16-63.
15. Stanley Kauffmann, "Back to Brando," *The New Republic,* 29 November 1993, pp. 28-29.
16. Brooks Atkinson, review of *A Streetcar Named Desire, New York Times,* 4 December 1947, p. 42; Ward Morehouse, "New Hit Named 'Desire,'" *Sun,* 4 December 1947, *National Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947,* p. 250; Louis Kronenberger, "A Sharp Southern Drama by Tennessee Williams," *PM,* 5 December 1947, *National Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947,* p. 250; William Hawkins, "'Streetcar' a Fine Play of Clashing Emotions," *New York World-Telegram, National Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947,* p. 251.
17. Peter Manso, *Brando: The Biography* (New York: Hyperion), p. 251; Harold Clurman, *Lies Like Truth: Theatre Reviews and Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 78; Eric Bentley, "Back to Broadway," *Theatre Arts,* November 1949, p. 14.
18. Howard Thompson, "On Arriving in Hollywood Via a 'Streetcar,'" *New York Times,* 23 July 1950, sec. II, p. 5. According to Wardell B. Pomeroy, *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), "We took the history of nearly everyone in the three separate companies playing *A Streetcar Named Desire* and were able to demonstrate, at least to our own satisfaction, that Stanley, or Blanche, or Mitch, as portrayed by one actor emerged differently when played by another because of differences in the actors' sexual backgrounds" (p. 191).
19. Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire,* p. 166.
20. Jerome S. McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 102.
21. Bill Terry, personal interview, 2 October 1997. According to T. J. Moffatt at Warner Bros. Home Video, 23 January 2002, the 1993 remains the only version "in print"; likewise, Warner Bros. has no intention of reissuing the 1951.

Mariana Mogilevich

CHARLIE'S PUSSYCATS

My first viewing of the movie *Charlie's Angels* last winter left me feeling rather strange. Maybe it was the circumstances surrounding the event. Or maybe it was the movie. First, always, there is the incidental, the personal. I had been waiting to see this movie before it even existed. Before the movie actually existed, it existed in theory, in a plan. A plan which was divulged to me, as a member of the general public, and which then became the fact of its filming, and of its editing, and fine-tuning for release, and finally of all the commercials and previews that made me want to see it so very much (I love the original "Angels," and also movies of TV shows—all four *Batman*s) that my boyfriend and I, rather than attending one of our closest friends' birthday party, instead for some reason saw fit to jump into a car one November night and drive to the nearest multiplex to see a movie. (Or you could argue that, enslaved by the onslaught of advertising, we were robbed of our free will and forced to go consume a commodity, which is the argument that *Josie and the Pussycats* makes, and which I will come to soon enough.) Halfway there, the feeling of an intense combination of guilt and stupidity was already churning in my stomach; it progressed through the showing, and afterwards, when not immediately forgiven for my sin, the movie was tainted even further.

But then there's the movie itself, which may or may not be intrinsically tainted. At the time, even through the cloud of guilt, I could feel that this movie was somehow not like other movies. Something was wrong with it. It was a bad movie, but many bad movies are more entertaining to watch than the "good" ones. Watching this one, I was restless, anxious, thrown off. Distraction is a term that I could use, not the old, Frankfurt School kind of distraction, but the distraction of film. I felt, perhaps a little bit, like I was watching TV. Not good television, hypnotic television, but the kind of television you watch purely out of boredom and from which you welcome any kind of diversion. At the end, I did not feel like I had seen a movie. I had seen *Charlie's Angels,* but the first term didn't quite encompass the latter. Much has been said recently about the death of film and cinema, the rather slow incursion of both television and digital technology into the movies, transforming them and taking them in the direction of younger, even more mass media. It has been a long process, one in which film and television have coexisted with various degrees of exchange and reciprocity for half a century now. But in *Charlie's Angels* so much of what television has done to film comes together, creating such a different product that the film's protagonists read as cinema's angels of death.

Or rather, film as a medium is not so much dead as it has folded over into itself, or rather, into television, and in some way become it. This kind of turning inside-out seems to occur in multiple dimensions in this film. After all, *Charlie's Angels* is the film remake of a television series, by a director whose credits before the movie were a variety of commercials and music videos and who goes by the name of McG (which is itself a retooling of Joseph McGinty Nichols). It makes sense, perhaps, that the incursion of television into film would reach its apex with material culled from an Aaron Spelling series—never before has film gone so deeply into TV. Now, it seems, it may never get out again.

The degree of tie-ins to the film leaves little work for the director. There are so many threads anchoring the film in our collective unconscious, proceeding directly from already assimilated elements of popular culture, that one hardly needs to see the film to, in a way, have already seen it. We already have the premise of the narrative—three beautiful crime-fighting babes fight crime and look hot—from the TV show. The original saw fit to render this premise plausible in an intro sequence, repeated at the beginning of every show, in which Charlie explains how he culled his Angels from a police academy. The introduction to the film, a redo of the television opener, dispenses with the explanation, and makes do with introduction through recall of the Angels' past, *on the TV show*. So we get, for instance, a reenactment of the infamous Angels-on-a-chain-gang scene, reshot with the new Angels. This

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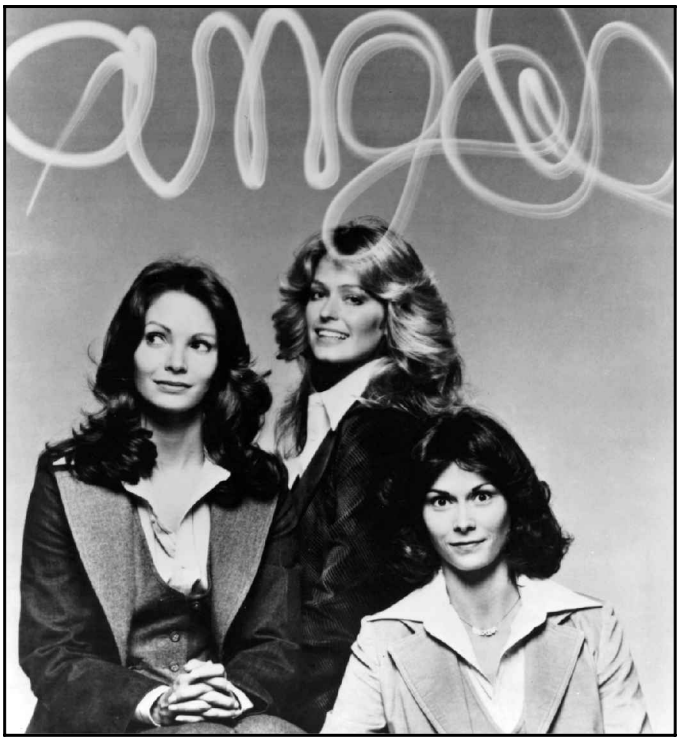
The Angels—the movie: (from left) Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu, and Cameron Diaz, with Bill Murray

intro shot does not refer to or preview a scene that will be recreated later on in the film (as its presence in the original intro referred back to an actual full-length episode of the television series). This clip refers us back to the same scene, in the series, and completely outside the film itself. Thus the movie version's narrative builds not on itself, exponentially, but purely on an outside context. The movie is not a closed, finite work, but rather a footnote, a set of citations, or an indexing of the original.

The television series itself, during its five-year run (1976-1981), constantly rehashed the content and structure of its own, "original," first few episodes. Eventually, even the permutations of the suspense/action/intrigue formula were exhausted, and as Angels were replaced by other Angels, always preserving the shape of the situation, each successive episode was itself a remake of the previous one. That introductory sequence, for the most part unchanged through the run of the series, anchored each of the episodes to some degree as one part in a continuous narrative. The film (set to become part of a new series when a sequel is released in 2003), rather than establishing itself in its own right, instead places itself in the continuity of the preexisting television series. Rather than being yet another element of the whole, it seeks to incorporate the whole into one element. It rearranges the original material into a concise stand-in, a convenient contemporary index to years of popular culture which we can now experience in just hours.

The film similarly draws on another exterior reference in the construction of the Angels themselves—they do not correspond in any way to the characters of the TV Angels; we as viewers read Cameron Diaz playing an Angel, or Drew Barrymore, or Lucy Liu, rather than Dylan, Alex, or Natalie. The entire film seems to float on the surface of a story that has already been laid out. *Charlie's Angels* needs only to refer, or to allude, to this base, and the story is complete. The retelling of old tales is not such a strange thing; it was the foundation of all oral cultures and something that we have only recently transcended. The experience of storytelling, so dear to Walter Benjamin, was an important social ritual—the importance is not so much the story



The Angels—the TV series:
Jaclyn Smith, Farrah Fawcett, and Kate Jackson

as the way and the context in which it is told. In film, where we now experience storytelling without communion, what seems to matter more is how it is decorated. The film's introduction wants to tell us this directly. *T.J. Hooker: The Movie* is playing on an airplane; someone complains, "Another movie from an old TV show"; the question is posed, "What can you do?"; and then the revolutionary (?) answer, from LL Cool J: "Walk out!" The film tries to shock by being up-front about its derivational character, but the sequence that immediately follows is an attempt to stop people from walking out, to establish that it has something novel to add to the story, as the film nervously tries to justify its existence. When LL "walks out," he jumps out of the airplane, followed by his entourage in a parachuting and water-rescue sequence that shows exactly what a big-budget movie can do that TV, and the original "Angels," cannot. With this point made, however, the film is then free to stop trying; it stops being different and starts feeling kind of strange. (Strangely enough, in a second viewing on video, the movie held together much better, confirming my suspicion that *Charlie's Angels* and all movies of its ilk represent not a new direction in movies, but a new direction for television.)

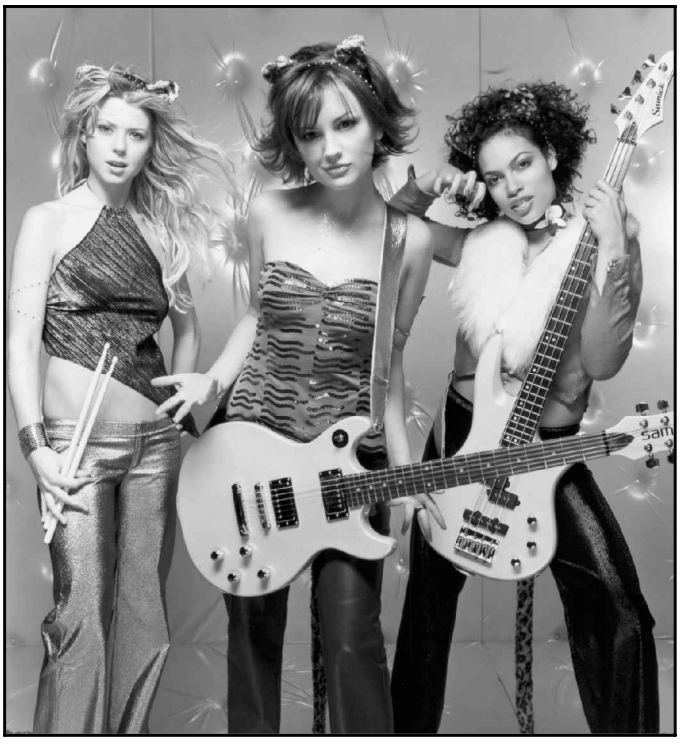
Freed from the constraints of narrative or any expository concerns, the movie can exist purely in the domain of the visual, as the rapid succession of images we have always associated with TV. On television (which, judging from the 50-plus copies of *Charlie's Angels* on the wall when I rented it from Blockbuster, is where the movie will be seen the most) what we are watching, as Jerry Mander points out in his argument on "How Television Dims the Mind," is dots flickering before us, turning on and off at a rate of 30 times per second (how does this compare with the 1/24 of a second which the film frame lasts before us?).[1] From this (and a whole battery of physiological allegations whose validity I am not equipped to assess) it follows that these fast-moving images bypass consciousness in "a kind of wakeful dreaming" (201). The images perhaps "bypass thinking and discernment" (199) so that processing them consciously would require their being "brought up and out again . . . [a] process similar to the way we struggle to keep our dream images after waking" (202). The movie on a larger scale presents us with a series of images that can go straight to our collective unconscious, a variety of types, stereotypes, and archetypes which we do not need to process because they are so familiar to us, so intrinsic to our way of understanding. The bad guy, the "creepy thin man," for one, is bad precisely because, and really just because, he is creepy and thin. I don't think we ever really learn what he's doing in all the places he shows up. Rather than a character, he is a symbol, a sign for creepiness—an idea or a feeling which we already know. Rather than experience his creepiness, we are simply motioned to experience a "creepy" which we have gotten and stored from somewhere else.

In forming the link to our unconscious, the movie relies heavily on thinly disguised metaphor and metonymy. Everything in *Charlie's Angels* is like something else. Alex, trying to harpoon a helicopter, says, "Let's see if I can win the teddy bear!" The arbitrary nature of the signs is itself alluded to, under the guise of irony, with the "murder" of Alex's actor boyfriend, which occurs contiguously with the real attack on Alex in the set on which they live (the backdrop to this standing in for a natural landscape which is actually all around them). Charlie, of course, exists as nothing but a sign: the defiantly retro speaker through which he communicates with the outside world; and even further as a metaphor, perhaps, for the infinite deferment of the signified, as the quest to find and finally see Charlie (which probably comes closest to being the goal of the film) leads the Angels to another speaker, to the sign once again.

But the signs, beyond the overtures they are making to our unconscious, signify something that itself lies on the surface. The film's props and style refer to their own visual savvy, to a sophistication that does not seem to be on a par with other aspects of the film. In "Film 1928" Siegfried Kracauer lamented, "If only the detail that has sunk to the level of an embellishment were treated with a bit of care!"[2] Today, the embellishment is itself the substance of the film—the story is merely a vehicle for the substance-less display of the beauty of the three Angels, a surface display which is not, however, insubstantial. We might read the Angels as a postmodern mass ornament, like the capitalist mode of production that spawned it, an end in itself.[3] Like the Tiller Girls of Kracauer's day, the Angels find their legitimacy in the aesthetic pleasure they provide with every flip of the hair or well-thought-out costume. Kracauer would perhaps be pleased with the very careful attention paid to aesthetic detail, the Airstream trailer, the old-school speaker, or, in *Josie and the Pussycats* (a discussion of which we seem to be infinitely deferring), the meticulous choice of furnishings in (the bad guy) Fiona's office: the Eames' *La Chaise* or the ribbed plastic chairs (I believe they are by Ron Arad, an up-and-coming Israeli designer) are the code of the film. It is an exercise in a look which draws on things we have already seen, and then doesn't do much more than fetishize them.

Does the "retro" wave, on which we have now been riding for more than ten years, signify an exhaustion of our creative faculties? This endless regurgitation of sources from the past, I wonder if we can't compare it to the historicism of Romanticism, a last fling with the preindustrial before the revolution of modernity set in? In this case, retro might be modernity's last gasp, a final recap of our world as it is before it changes again. What it is changing to, we have no way of knowing. It has something to do with digital, apparently.

For an idea of where things are going, I turn to *Josie and the Pussycats,* or rather, not to the movie, but to the theater where I saw it, and the movies before the movie. The previews, really, but I've seen these movies already, everyone has. There was *Tomb Raider,* the movie of a video game. Then there was a movie about aliens, which was a parody of a movie about aliens starring David Duchovny, of TV alien-investigating fame. There was *The Mummy Returns,* featuring TV wrestler The Rock (who is also a best-selling author), and a movie starring TV-transplants Rob Schneider and Colleen from "Survivor." And bookending all of these were two movies about talking animals. Talking cats, talking dogs, talking raccoons, otters, and ducks, all speaking English and moving their mouths and making all these well-timed cute physical gestures. This is the height of technology. The last statement of modernity or the first cry of the New World is a wise-cracking beagle. This is what digital can do.



The Pussycats:
Tara Reid, Rachael Leigh Cook, and Rosario Dawson

This is also what the culture industry can do. Theodor Adorno would be pleased, in a roundabout way, to see how a TV show is a video game is a movie is a book: "The various media [the culture industry] utilizes are so seamlessly intermeshed that reflection can no longer catch its breath between them in order to realize that their world is not the world."[4] *Josie and the Pussycats* is the movie remake of a TV cartoon, which was based on a comic, which was a spin-off of another series of comics. *Josie and the Pussycats* is also a remake (and parody?) of the movie version of the television series "Charlie's Angels." "Only the interaction of all the processes," Adorno continues, "working together though differing from each other in terms of technique and effect, constitutes the climate of the culture industry." Here, *all* the processes have come together in one enormous cultural-industrial-commercial product, which is in fact about an enormous cultural-industrial-commercial conspiracy. I cannot find

an elegant way to put this: *Josie and the Pussycats* blew my mind.

I continue to quote Adorno, this time in "Television as Ideology:"

> The culture industry is not at all disturbed by the idea that none of its creations are serious, that everything is simply merchandise and entertainment. Long ago it made this a part of its own ideology. Among the scripts analyzed, several consciously play at being kitsch, and they give the less naïve viewer a knowing wink as though saying that they do not take themselves seriously, they are not that stupid; they take the viewer, as it were, into their confidence by flattering his intellectual vanity. But a shameful deed is made no better by denouncing itself as such; one must do the offense the honor it refuses itself and take it at its own word—the one that sinks into the viewers. [5]

A short digression on the difference between emulation and satire: Emulation is the imitation of something in the hopes of becoming the same thing, of reaching the same ends or reaping the same benefits in the same way as the original. It is a form of reproduction. Satire is the reproduction of an original in the ironic mode, the creation of a not-exact copy in order to expose the flaws and inconsistencies in the original. The idea of irony implies some sort of disgust or deprecation. Emulation and satire are closely related, and yet would seem to be mutually exclusive. But now this distinction is breaking down. *Charlie's Angels* is *Charlie's Angels*. It is self-deprecatory, a little, but it is what it says it is, which is what it is trying to be. *Josie and the Pussycats,* also, is *Charlie's Angels*. But *Josie and the Pussycats* is also exposing *Charlie's Angels* as a scam. *Josie* is another remake of an old television show, this time a cartoon. It, too, features three "strong" and successful young women who must confront evildoers and triumph over them. In its proximity to *Charlie's Angels,* though, it is—temporally and thematically—a second remake, an attempt to achieve the same commercial success with the same group of viewers who reacted so well to *Charlie's Angels*. This sort of remaking is not supposed to be apparent, yet it has to be, if it is to have the desired effect. *Josie* covers its tracks as it tries to send up the culture and processes out of which *Charlie's Angels* was made, posing as a satire of contemporary youth commercial culture while participating in it to the fullest. Television supposedly uses its surface-lying characteristics to penetrate and violate the unconscious. But when the subliminal becomes conscious, the film develops an illusion of transparency while its depths are somehow even further obscured.

The irony is enormous. *Josie* is a film mocking the worldwide business of selling products, and the use of entertainment to "subtly" compel people to consume. There is, *in the film,* a global conspiracy to brainwash teens into super-consumers through subliminal messages. *Josie and the Pussycats* is at the same time a product for entertainment (a film) whose sole real mission is to (not-so-subtly) compel teenagers to engage in unbridled consumption of consumer goods. Perhaps it is the ultimate triumph of the culture industry. Now, selling the not-selling of products may prove to be the most effective way of selling products. The film is simultaneously hilarious and a dead-serious business, just as I felt, watching it, that I should have been getting paid to see it, but also that I couldn't wait to pay up my ten bucks and see it again.[6]

The degree of self-reflexivity in the film, the number of considerations about its own existence and purpose that it brings up to the surface of the film, is astounding. This sort of self-deprecation, as Adorno points out, or as it occurs in *Charlie's Angels,* is very often a form of insurance, a confession of flimsiness in anticipation of ridicule. But *Josie and the Pussycats,* as many times as it is removed from its source, is not so flimsy a premise that it could not have been made relatively deadpan. Brendan Fraser as *George of the Jungle* seems all the more preposterous, and yet, though I have not actually seen that film, I am sure it is no *Josie*. The references to *Josie*'s context of production are blatantly veiled by the thinnest pretense of subliminality. The effect is one of a strange and simultaneous clarity and surreality. When the Pussycats and their entourage board their private jet to fly into "the City" to become big stars, someone asks their manager's bitchy sister what she's doing there. She replies, "I was in the comic." When asked to repeat herself, she says quickly, "Never mind." The blatant is visibly, actively pushed into the subconscious. The Freudian slip, or the under-the-breath comment, shows up again in the context of the film itself when Fiona, the evil head of the media giant allied with the government to brainwash the teens, has a similar half-conversation with the government mass-media liaison. She half-reveals her plans to use the technology for her own purposes, and then tries to cover them up. The agent appears not to notice, but it turns out the Feds have it in for her, anyway.

The movie alternates in its mode of communication from the conscious to the unconscious and a strange space in between (the space, precisely, of the half-muttered, half-heard utterance). *Josie*'s relationship to *Charlie's Angels* is particularly troubling in this sense, as it moves slickly between a shameless knocking-off and a strange sort of satire cum self-parody. The two movies begin almost identically. Or rather, *Josie* begins just like *Charlie's Angels*. The second scene of *Josie* and the very first of the "original" are set in a highly decorative airplane. On both airplanes, someone is bad and everyone else is good or just an innocent bystander. The badness of the bad person is revealed, and then there is a surprise jump out of the airplane, in a parachute. Never mind that in *Charlie's Angels* the good guys have the parachutes and in *Josie* it's the bad guys. The concepts, the individual signifiers, are a perfect match. As obvious as the relationship is, though, it is not blatant. My jaw dropped; but my boyfriend (who has seen more girl-power-trinity movies lately than can possibly be healthy) didn't notice the connection at all. No one would, if you were not watching with *Charlie's Angels* specifically in mind. If you were not, that is, actively struggling *against* the unconscious mode of reception with which the film and television function.

But then the movie does something stranger. Maybe it's in case we are subconsciously beginning to catch on that Josie, Melody, and Valerie are fake Dylan, Natalie, and Alex—it's Adorno's "knowing wink" to the less naïve viewer. As Josie and her Pussycats are rising to stardom and we watch (literally) their song climb the billboard charts—the song, incidentally, which was a hit before anyone really heard it, just like Josie was a star before the band had recorded anything, just like their new manager loves the Pussycats even though, as Josie points out, "You haven't even heard us play yet," just like *Josie* (the movie) and the movie it's mimicking (earnestly? satirically?) were movies before we had seen them yet, before they were even made—anyway, as the Pussycats are climbing to stardom and the fake headlines scroll across the screen, *Variety* announces "Barrymore, Diaz, and Liu to play Pussycats in movie."

This is an odd moment, if you catch it. Many people will not, because, like the muttered comments, it lasts a second, and there are other things, distracting things, going on at the same time. But for those who do see the liminally subliminal message, the movie is confessing (by poking fun at) its strictly derivational origins and its status (or lack thereof, intellectually) as a reproduction of a reproduction of a reproduction. But it is also twisting its own message around, retroactively insinuating, it seems, that the Angels are the copy, and this the original. Or if not the original, then a great improvement on it, in its greater sophistication and worldliness. This double function of irony is ingrained in the very form of the movie. The message, in exposing the conspiracy to brainwash teens, is that such a conspiracy is bad, that teens should not be consumers, that the forms of culture which inculcate these values are fraudulent. Du Jour, the (oh-so-ironically named) band which the Pussycats replace as medium for the message, decidedly sucks. But never does the movie say that the Pussycats don't rock. I must admit they kind of do. As the movie decries consumerism and exposes the label-craziness of the world, it sees no choice but to illustrate this by saturating the screen with logos and commercial products, all placements which have been paid for, by Motorola, Target, Starbucks, Puma, Diesel, and so on (so on practically to infinity—the sponsors of this movie are too many to list), in the expectation that they will indeed inspire the movie's viewers to buy their products.[7] One critic who actually seems to have understood the movie puts it this way: "Parker Posey and Tom Butler play evil non-geniuses out to sell stuff through pop music, which means, I suppose, they are appearing as directors Deborah Kaplan and Harry Elfont. Motorola and Starbucks play products being sold through product placement."[8]

Which again, *Josie and the Pussycats* (ironically) admits to. In the most bizarre comic moment of all, when the conspiracy is exposed at the end of the film, the Feds are perfectly happy to let it go out into the open. Subliminal messages in music, they say, are really not so great anyway. "We've found a better way to brainwash teens—movies." After which, for just a second, but long enough for everyone, even the least sophisticated viewers, even the fifth graders, to catch, the "subliminal message" flashes on the screen—

JOSIE AND THE PUSSYCATS IS
THE BEST MOVIE EVER

JOIN THE ARMY

First of all, it was only a few months earlier that the Navy really did use a Hollywood movie to advertise—remember the joint commercials for both *Men of Honor* and the U.S. Navy? But this is of tangential import. The message isn't serious, it says, because it isn't subliminal. We all saw it, just as we all saw the product placement which saturated the film beforehand. Because it isn't subliminal, this movie is not like the

movies which would ostensibly get made in *Josie*'s world. Or couldn't this be the discovery "the Feds" have made? That not hiding something is the very best way of hiding it. Because we can see it, no one can be accused of trying to trick anyone, of manipulating their subconscious. We know that movies are trying to sell things, beyond selling themselves. The sophisticated viewer's vanity is flattered (we return to Adorno). I have a friend who very often says true and obnoxious things but, when he's being offensive, always closes his comments with "Just kidding." You know he's not kidding, because what he has just said is true. You want to kick his ass sometimes, but you can't, because he was "just kidding." Maybe it's good to know what he's thinking, or maybe he should admit that he means it, or just stop saying obnoxious things. You can't get mad at *Josie,* either, because it is telling the truth, but also "joking." But also telling the truth. The level of irony, and receptiveness to irony, in our world today is higher than it has ever been, and more sophisticated even than what Adorno witnessed in the 50s. There are more sophisticated viewers, and the culture industry, rather than winking, is gesticulating wildly. It has reached its apex, which doesn't mean that we know where to go from here.

I am right now wearing Diesel jeans, and I think *Josie and the Pussycats* is the best movie ever. I'm just not sure for whom.

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Notes

1. Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Quill, 1978).
2. Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 314.
3. Kracauer, p. 78.
4. Theodor W. Adorno, "Prologue to Television," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 50.
5. Adorno, "Television as Ideology," in *Critical Models*, p. 68.
6. This strange pleasure was apparently lost on most people, and the film was a financial disappointment.
7. The directors actually claim, in their commentary on the *Josie and the Pussycats* DVD, that when they approached the companies involved for their sponsorship, these actually refused to pay, but the products were left in anyway. Analysis of this fact, unfortunately, might go too far past the boundaries of this discussion.
8. Jane Dark, "Commodify Your Dissent," *The Village Voice*, 13 April 2001.

Reviews

Affliction

Director: Paul Schrader. Producers: Eric Berg; Linda Reisman; Frank K. Isaac. Writer: Schrader, from the novel by Russell Banks. Cinematographer: Paul Sarossy. Music: Michael Brook. Editor: Jay Rabinowitz. Lions Gate Films.

I The American cinema has a long history of telling us stories that are linked quite precisely to particular places: stories of the streets, but also stories of rural townships and suburban neighborhoods. No matter how re-created or fictionalized these places may be, they carry with them a range of values, associations, and resonances that are vital to the story. We might think of Robert Altman's take on early 70s L.A. culture in *The Long Goodbye* (1972), Martin Scorsese's depiction of Little Italy in *Mean Streets* (1973), or Terrence Malick's tale of the outlaw Kit in *Badlands* (1973), who fell into "bad soil" and "grew up like a big poisonous weed."[1] More recently, Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997) conveys a hauntingly precise sense of a community and place both frozen in regret. Paul Schrader's 1998 adaptation of Russell Banks's *Affliction* can now be added to this list.

The power of Schrader's film lies in its re-creation of the climatic harshness of the New England countryside and in its capacity to draw out of this environment a history of behavior that spans the generations of a single family. It may even be that place is the wrong word. To speak of a human as well as a geographic environment is to inevitably conjure the idea of a milieu. According to Gilles Deleuze, "milieux which actualize and modes of behavior which embody" are the cornerstones of American narrative cinema.[2] It is the way in which these two things interact that constitutes its logic and efficiency: "The milieu and its forces . . . act on the character, throw him a challenge, and constitute a situation in which he is caught. The character reacts in his turn . . . so as to respond to the situation, to modify the milieu, or his relation with the milieu, with the situation, with other characters" (141).

What is interesting here is the investigation into how these linkages and connections work their way across the films we have in mind. I am suggesting that the structure of *Affliction* (and of *Mean Streets, The Long Goodbye,* and *Badlands*) helps us to understand exactly how the cinema is able to create out of sounds and images the geography and history, the drama and the narrative, of a human environment. It is also important to note that it is male behavior that is central to the drama in *Affliction*: a drama of fathers and sons, brothers and best friends, the places they occupy, and the stories they tell or are unable to tell about each other. Of course, any investigation into place is inevitably an investigation into a particular kind of storytelling in which memory is put to the test. This is why a number of the films mentioned above draw us in through the use of a narrating voice trawling back in time, a voice reminding us that this place, these houses, these streets are built on foundations held together—but not held firm—by human memory.

II *Affliction* begins with a series of images set against a black background: a wire fence line leading toward houses in the distance, a small prefabricated house with a police car parked out front, a garage, a street scene . . . all of which are blanketed by snow with only the slightest indication of movement to indicate that these images are not indeed photographs. Each image remains on the screen just long enough for us to register its content and details before it fades out. Although these snapshots mean very little to us as yet, the careful way they are framed and presented demands our attention. "Look and see," the film seems to say. "It was right here in this place, in this house and on these streets that the events we are about to watch happened. They could not have happened anywhere else." Although there are no people inhabiting these images, their rhetoric is unmistakably that of a family album: a memorial record, as André Bazin put it, of lives "halted at a set moment in their duration."[3] The final image in this series is of a country road at night, an image that gradually enlarges to fill the screen. An off-screen voice, resonant and familiar, starts to speak at almost the same time that a set of headlights appear. The car is driven by Wade Whitehouse, the afflicted subject of the tale.

> This is the story of my older brother's strange criminal behavior and disappearance. We who loved him no longer speak of Wade. It's as if he never existed. . . . By telling his story like this, by breaking the silence about him, I tell my own story as well. Everything of importance, that is everything that gives rise to the telling of this story, occurred during a single deer-hunting season in a small town in upstate New Hampshire where Wade was raised and so was I.

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In "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin offers a beautiful description of how traditional storytelling, unlike information or a report, does not aim to convey the "pure essence" of the thing it describes but "sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel."[4] In *Affliction,* the opening words establish not only the particular tense of the tale and the fraternal relationship between narrator (Rolfe) and protagonist (Wade), but also the outline of a deep complicity between the storyteller and the thing he describes. "The story is really about him telling the story," Schrader proposes. "In the book this aspect is much clearer because everything is seen through the narrator's eyes. He's telling you about events that he's only surmising, because he's talked to people in the town."[5] Schrader insists that Rolfe is as important to the story as "the man he's talking about."[6] How do we understand this complicity between Rolfe and the story he is telling? What is the nature of the relationship that binds the two brothers together in the tragic events that occurred in this small New Hampshire town? And further, how do we understand the way these words bind us as spectators to the story being told?

It is Rolfe who puts together the scenario that transforms the hunting accident involving one of Wade's closest friends, Jack Hewitt, and Evan Twombley, a Union official, into a murder conspiracy. It is also Rolfe who, after their mother's funeral, rekindles Wade's flagging commitment to this version of events. And in the end, Rolfe is the one left behind, the one obligated to tell this story over and over again. But the complicity between Rolfe and Wade extends far beyond these narrative details; it reaches back to their shared history of childhood and their traumatic relationship to their father. The story told by Rolfe is primarily a story about the past and how it leaves its mark in the form of either physical or emotional bruises. "I was a careful child," Rolfe tells Wade during one of their conversations. "I grew up to be a careful adult." And almost as an afterthought, he adds, "At least I was never afflicted by that man's violence." These words hang in the air for a long moment. Wade's response—when it does come—is couched in laughter, yet devastating nonetheless: "That's what you think."

Already we can say this much about the milieu in *Affliction*: more than a set of challenges or forces that act upon the characters and which they then respond to, the milieu is constituted by an ever-present relationship to the past. More precisely still, it is a way of understanding this past and its significance. Yet there is nothing particularly mysterious about the way the past is treated in *Affliction*—it is not the repository of a secret to be unlocked. The past functions more prosaically, so prosaically it seems that Wade is able to encounter his past—or a version of it at least—floating just out of earshot as the central narrative of a barfly's conversations. Wade's relationship to his father has become part of the folklore of the community, part of the very public process by which the community tells stories about itself and its inhabitants. Wade listens to the story coming from the other side of the bar as if it was the story of someone very close, someone he knows and recognizes, yet someone from whom he is also fundamentally removed. In *Affliction,* recognition and estrangement work hand-in-hand. They are part of the same response to a past that one can neither simply embrace nor reject. In this film, the past is more like a habit or way of responding that binds one to certain places and people: a type of social inheritance that *claims us*. This is why Wade (Nick Nolte) and his father (James Coburn)—in spite of their antipathy and violence—are drawn together in a strange kind of pact that leaves no room for other characters. "The way that father and son move so easily into one another's physical space," writes Kent Jones, "is chilling, and by film's end Nolte has even begun to resemble the older actor."[7] As we watch Wade sit at his father's table in the film's final moments quietly sipping Brown's Canadian whisky, it is clear that the physical resemblance between the actors stands in for a much deeper resemblance and complicity.

III

On a number of levels, *Affliction* represents an interesting point of convergence in Schrader's directorial output. The precise, measured way in which Willem Dafoe as Rolfe speaks the opening lines gives the impression that he is reading these words back from the draft of a story under construction. Dafoe's voice directly addressing the audience and leading us along a narrative of coincidences, past traumas, and tragic misrecognition forms a sonorous link to the figure of John Le Tour, also played by Willem Dafoe, in Schrader's earlier film *Light Sleeper* (1991)—a connection that will multiply and echo across the various formal and thematic structures at work in these two films and that will also take in a number of other roles and cinematic collaborations. Schrader has made a number of observations on the way his films both converge around a set of issues and themes yet also separate themselves out. Both *Affliction*

A family afflicted: (from left) Nick Nolte, James Coburn, Willem Dafoe, and Sissy Spacek

and Schrader's 1992 film *Touch* were adaptations; he claims that his goal with these films was "to capture the voice of the author"—in the first instance, Banks, and in the latter, Elmore Leonard. With *Affliction,* however, we can identify a coming together of the author's central concerns and those that Schrader describes as his own:

> If I'm working with my own voice, the subject that is of most interest to me deals with a man who drifts around, often at night, peeping into other people's lives. He is without a life of his own, and is trying to figure out how to get one, often operating against his own best interests in trying to find it. That is my number one story, and out of that come other stories.[8]

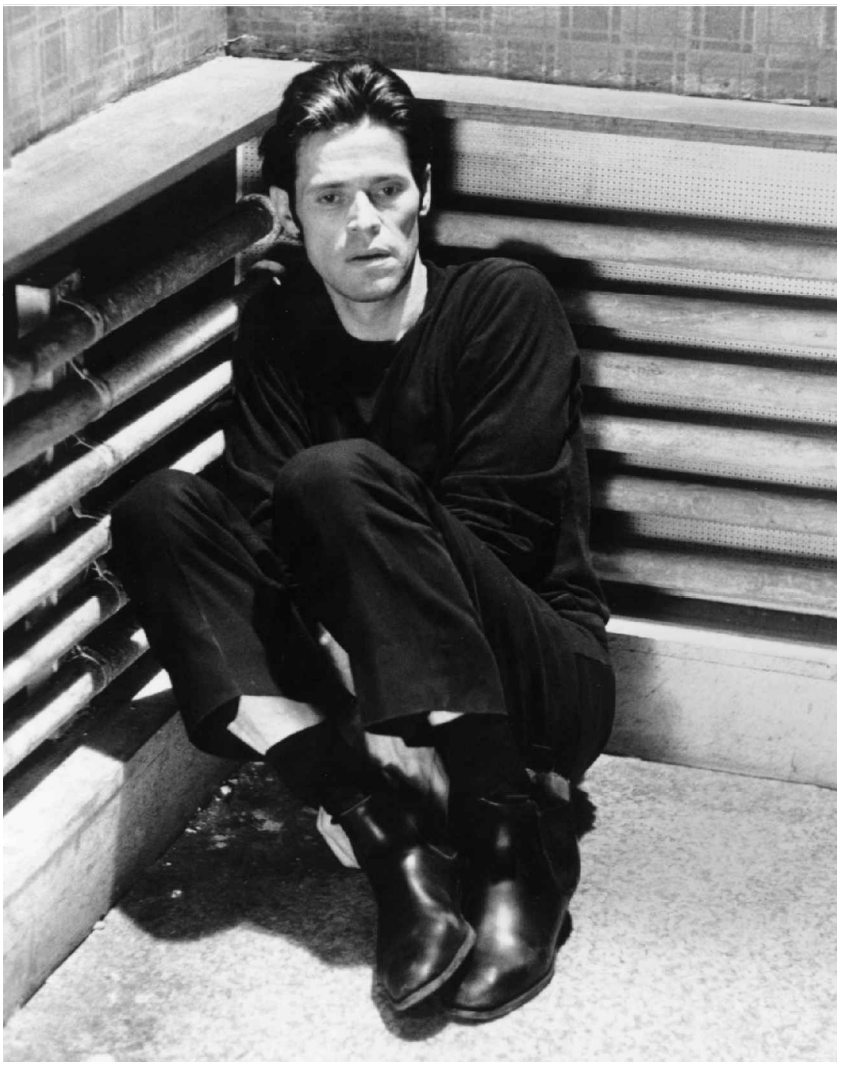
The man "without a life of his own . . . trying to figure out how to get one" is a familiar character in Schrader's work: Le Tour, of course, and Julian Kay, in *American Gigolo* (1979), and Travis Bickle, in *Taxi Driver* (1976)—Scorsese's film for which Schrader wrote the script. Across each of these films and central characters, however, there is a sometimes overt and sometimes barely implied sense of continuity of experience. Schrader described *Light Sleeper* as

> [the] third installment of a certain character, a voyeur, a drifter. When he was in his twenties he was very hostile and paranoid and was a cab driver. Then in his thirties he was very narcissistic and self-involved and he was a gigolo. And now he's forty, he's …anxious. He hasn't made anything of his life, he doesn't know what will become of his life, and he's a drug delivery boy.[9]

These roles and associations are as much a part of the milieu in *Affliction* as the snow-covered landscape and the slow trudging steps of the characters. They draw us into the world of the story by suggesting a past not literally that of the characters or the film but one that works according to the logic of resemblance and similarity. And just as the films taken together weave a fabric of common obsessions, similarities, and echoes, within the individual narratives we find a

dramatic focus that is less about a clearly defined action or event than something much harder to define: reflection, memory, yearning, an inability to look forward—in short, a kind of stubborn, obsessive melancholy.

IV The central narrative event in *Light Sleeper,* as in *Affliction,* is a false event—a series of connections between people and events that exist only in the imagination of the central character: the overdose of a girl in the park, the sudden reappearance of Le Tour's ex-lover, his need to find a new job and direction as he approaches middle age, and a devastating collision between past and present lives during the course of one of his drug deliveries. What do these events mean? Do they have a significance for Le Tour that is just out of sight for both the character and viewer? "What do you see?" he asks the psychic he turns to for advice. "What is around me? . . . Is it dark? Have I run out of luck?" Visions, signs, prophecies, and astrological predictions are a key part of the New Age milieu in which Le Tour circulates. Yet while this world seems cluttered with potential meanings, the central character finds himself drifting further and further away from the possibility of insight. This loss of center is represented by the way the camera follows Le Tour in and out of the rooms, apartments, restaurants, and nightclubs where he meets his clients, though he never stays long enough to reside in or become part of these places. And it is during these fleeting visits that one can notice the camera drift away from him to scrutinize the world, its textures and colors. "The camera isn't necessarily motivated by the action," Schrader's cameraman Ed Lachman tells us:



Willem Dafoe in *Light Sleeper*

> It's used in a more psychological way. Let's say that sometimes we use the camera at a higher angle to Le Tour, so you feel a sense of oppression because the camera's above the eye line. And sometimes the camera will draw away from the character, to situate him in his environment or comment on his relationship with it.[10]

Interestingly, Lachman states that the inspiration for this approach was drawn from watching some of Antonioni's films from the 60s—*La Notte* (1961), *L'Eclisse* (1962), and *Red Desert* (1964). In *Light Sleeper,* it is not that milieu and character verge on becoming independent of each other, it is more that the character has a tendency to fade into the milieu, to become secondary to other activities and points of interest that grab the camera's attention. The camera seems to know something that Le Tour has also come to divine: it will have to make its own way through a world that little by little is pulling away and leaving us behind. The notebooks that Le Tour fills up and then discards testify to an accumulation of events and experiences

that lack a connecting thread to pull them all together. Piles of garbage, wine bottles, experiences, memories, and moods—one on top of the other marking both an unknown contiguity and a kind of psychic paralysis.

V "You will say that I should have known terrible things were about to happen. You will say that I was responsible. But even so, what could I have done by then?" Rolfe's supplication—both acknowledging and deflecting responsibility—signals that the relationship between the two brothers in *Affliction* is a relationship haunted by the question of betrayal. For Schrader this is the true dramatic heart of the film.

> You have in this case two siblings of an abusive parent. One of those siblings will be selected out for the violence, in this case the older one. . . . On one hand [Rolfe is] very grateful that his brother took the blows for him. On the other hand, he's jealous, because in that kind of family structure, violence equals attention equals love.[11]

Is Wade another in the long line of male heroes identified by Adrian Martin, heroes who "find themselves duped by those closest to them—not merely those least suspected, but those most totally and blindly trusted"?[12] Martin adds, "This is the larger, more brilliant, and certainly more evil form of betrayal—the betrayal that exploits love, the sweet cheat."

Rolfe's betrayal of Wade in *Affliction*—if one could even call it that—is certainly less overt than the scenarios Martin has in mind. Hardly a betrayal at all. Perhaps more a barely conscious act of exploitation and abuse that, like all the other acts of emotional and physical abuse in the film, contains its own momentum and afterlife. "Don't you care about that, about what's right?" Wade demands after Rolfe coolly lays out his theory of what really happened to Twombley during the hunting trip. "All I care about," Rolfe replies, "is what really happened. What the truth is. I'm a student of history, remember." For someone who describes himself as being a careful adult, the apparent carelessness with which Rolfe feeds Wade's anger is utterly extraordinary. So extraordinary, in fact, that it is hard not to read into his actions the latent resentment and jealousy that Schrader describes so well.

And as we listen to Rolfe lay out his theory of what actually happened during the hunting trip, something else becomes apparent. Referring to the writings of Rohmer and Chabrol on Hitchcock, Deleuze proposes: "One does not commit a crime in Hitchcock, one delivers it up, one gives it or one exchanges it" (201). In *I Confess* (1952), the murderer both confesses to the crime and passes it on within the sanctified realm of the holy confessional. "The criminal has always done his crime *for* another . . . for the innocent man who, whether we like it or not, is innocent no longer" (201). Rather than any simple contrast between innocent and guilty, Deleuze argues that Hitchcock's concern is with the set of relations that surround the action. The exchange or offering up of the crime is the means by which these relations take on a dramatic momentum. In *Affliction,* also, what we find is a crime that is delivered up, in this instance from brother to brother. Rolfe's careless speculations become a trigger for the actual crime, a crime surrounded and determined in advance of its occurrence by a series of relations spanning both the present lives of the characters and their shared history.

An event happening in advance of itself and outside its proper time: this, we might propose, is the logic of Hitchcockian action. But it also resembles something else that is central to the narrative in *Affliction*: the logic of trauma. In Freud's writings, it is not simply that the meaning of traumatic events is lost to time. Rather, these events are bound to a temporal logic in which origins are displaced by a radiation of meaning and affect both forward and back across the history of the subject. "The traumatized," Cathy Caruth goes as far as to argue, "become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess."[13] This difficult history generates a particular type of compulsive yet highly problematic narration marked by both repetition and temporal dispersal. In *Affliction,* the shooting of Jack Hewitt, like the imaginary murder of Twombley that it follows and seeks to avenge, is itself one more instance in the re-telling of a traumatic history circulating between the two brothers and their father. It is these unstable relations between past and present rather than any animosity between Wade and Jack Hewitt that determine the meaning of the act which Rolfe describes and conjures into existence.

There is something inexorable about this logic of repetition and replaying: kin follows kin, violence follows violence. "You goddamn son of a bitch," Wade's father spits out as he stands over Wade. "I know you. You're my blood. You're a goddamn piece of my fucking heart." At the end of the film, the fire that consumes the dead body of Glen Whitehouse, Wade's father, seems a direct manifestation of the fire produced by the alcohol that has determined his relationship to his family. As Wade sits drinking at the table watching the barn burn to the ground it is unclear whether he has

now mastered his father's lesson in violence or found a way of escaping this affliction through an act at once brutal and self-immolating. What stands out, however, as we watch the disaster unfold, is the way that everything in this cinematic landscape carries with it the weight of something that has been dispersed across a range of different transferences and relations—from the inside to the outside, from the past to the present, and from character to milieu.

VI Either unwilling or unable to sleep, both Wade and Rolfe engage in what Maurice Blanchot describes as "nocturnal wandering."[14] The nocturnal wanderer or light sleeper is a recognizable figure across Schrader's oeuvre: from Travis to Le Tour to the fatigued medic in Schrader's script for *Bringing Out the Dead* (1999), we are dealing with characters unable to rest, unable to renounce the day, characters who, in Blanchot's words, "appear more or less guilty. What do they do? They make night present." Overburdened by memory, by the past, by a consciousness that refuses to shut down, these characters spend their time fabulating stories, making connections, filling out diaries, and, in La Tour's case, scribbling odd lists: people whose eyes don't match up, people who are left-handed. "Whoever does not sleep cannot stay awake," Blanchot helpfully reminds us. And it is true that in *Affliction* an overwhelming sense of fatigue seems to hang over the characters.

This fatigue needs to be understood in its everyday sense of all-pervading tiredness: for instance, the way Wade trudges slowly back up the steps of the town hall after losing another fight with Lillian, his ex-wife, about his daughter, or the way his body slumps forward in the grader as he clears the snowbound streets. But fatigue also needs to be understood as something more than a physical manifestation, something closer to the way it is used in Jean Epstein's early writings on cinema. For Epstein, fatigue is photogenic because it is a state of being marked by habit and routine. Moreover, it is universally experienced: "Everyone is a connoisseur," Epstein writes, "there are no amateurs. We are all erudite and professional scholars of fatigue, neurasthenic esthetes."[15] Fatigue marks a world in which time manifests itself through repetition: one day after another, one battle or personal slight after another. As Lillian puts it with all her anger and disappointment at Wade: "You amaze me. Year after year in the same old ways." In a world burdened by a sense of repetition, routine, and destinies passed on from father to son, the only way to break out is through an action or act of violence that in the end does not modify or change the situation but rebounds back on the one who commits it.

> VII Wade killed Jack . . . just as surely as Jack did not kill Evan Twombley—even accidentally. The link between Jack and Twombley, La Riviere, and Mel Gordon existed only in Wade's wild imaginings and briefly, I admit, in mine as well. . . . La Riviere and Mel Gordon were indeed in business. The Parker Mountain ski resort is now advertised across the country. The community of Lawford, as such, no longer exists. It is an economic zone between Littleton and Catamont. The house is still in Wade's name, and I keep paying taxes on it. It remains empty. Now and then I drive out there and sit in my car and wonder: "Why not let it go? Why not let La Riviere buy it and build the condominiums he wants there?" We want to believe Wade died that same November, froze to death on a bench or a sidewalk. You cannot understand how a man, a normal man, a man like you or me, can do such a terrible thing.

Words as much as images bring *Affliction* to a close—words telling us something of what has happened to the people and the blighted places to which they belong. Rolfe's words also continue the odd dance between complicity and denial, recognition and estrangement, that marks his relation to the story he tells. The grainy low-resolution images taken from inside the house in this final scene were used earlier to represent Wade's memories of the past. Now, however, we are in the present or, more precisely, in the aftermath of Wade's actions. Although the house is empty of human habitation, everything else is still in place, the beds have been made, the photographs are still on the wall. Even the woolen cap lying next to the gloves and newspapers on the dining-room table could have been left there by Wade some time before the terrible event. The camera moves over these objects, taking stock of what still remains: the clues to a crime without mystery. After travelling down the stairs, it comes to rest near the very table where Wade sat drinking his whisky and watching the barn burn. Outside the window we can see the charred remains and a group of small figures moving around the wreckage.

Everything about this final scene—its graininess, the movement of the camera and its scrutiny of objects and surfaces—seems designed to reinforce a sense that, despite all that we have seen and now know

about the family that lived in this place, something still remains, something that refuses to give way to the inexorable logic of economic zones and property redevelopment. In *Affliction,* place finally stands for something that can't be redeveloped or abandoned, something that draws us back and fixes us in place. Rolfe's refusal to sell the family property to La Riviere is not simply a resistance to the promise of a quick buck or a nostalgic holding on to something past. His words—and Schrader's images—draw out a sense of obligation that, with his father's death and Wade's disappearance, binds him to this place like a memory or history. The ending also reinforces something that we have sensed all along: if the story in *Affliction* could be said to "belong" to any one person it would be as much the property of Rolfe as it is of Wade. Perhaps everything we were told, everything that happened, was Rolfe's attempt to claim ownership not of the property that comes to him with Wade's disappearance but of the past, so that he can tell its story. These stories of brothers, fathers, and best friends, stories that, as Rolfe admits, we can never fully understand, demand to be retold—not only from character to character but, as we have seen, from film to film. It may be that in the end this is what we are left with in *Affliction*: not the security of ownership but a cinematic milieu where the phantasms and stories of the past—the director's past as well as that of the characters—cover everything like a deep snow that refuses to thaw and melt away.

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Notes

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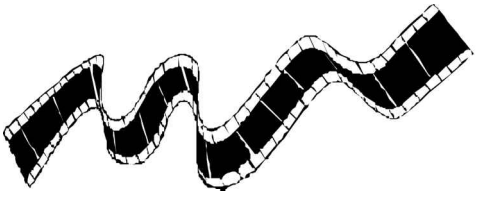

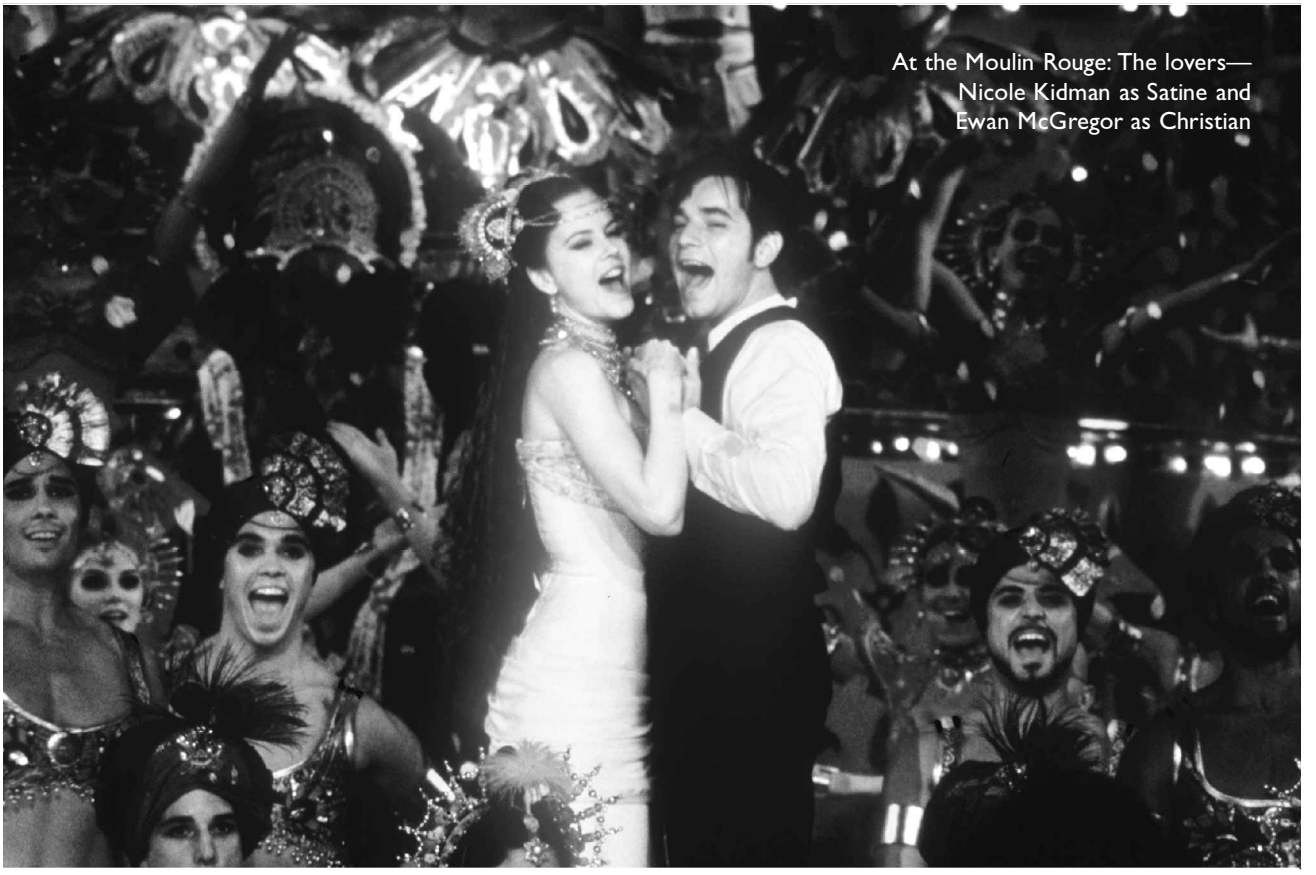

At the Moulin Rouge: The lovers—
Nicole Kidman as Satine and
Ewan McGregor as Christian

Moulin Rouge

Director: Baz Luhrmann. Writers: Luhrmann, Craig Pearce. Producers: Fred Baron, Martin Brown, Luhrmann. Cinematographer: Donald McAlpine. Editor: Jill Bilcock. Twentieth Century-Fox.

Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* is an extravagant movie full of excess. Most spectators either love it or loathe it. As one of its fans, I see it as a brilliant celebratory pastiche of the movie musical that highlights defining characteristics of the genre, some better known than others. It reveals a deep structural tension in the musical genre on the register of tone—between a sentimentalizing romantic love that always pushes toward melodrama (a related genre, equally known for emotional excess and visual extravagance, whose musical dimension is underscored by the *melos* in its name) and an edgy reflexive irony built into "the-show-must-go-on" rhetoric of the backstage business that always keeps the genre wavering on the verge of comedy, parody, and satire. In *Moulin Rouge,* the reflexive backstage rhetoric blatantly revels in the primacy of love as the musical's only meaningful thematic and the film's dominant moralizing refrain. As the final title explicitly spells out (in case you missed it in the numerous previous reiterations), "This movie is about . . . Truth . . . Beauty . . . Freedom . . . But above all, LOVE!" Yet paradoxically, as sometimes occurs in melodrama, through such exaggeration and repetition the film simultaneously suggests that this blatantly artificial genre may be the only realm where such love can still be found, let alone flourish.

Moulin Rouge also demonstrates the international scope of the musical, tracing the hegemonic Hollywood genre to its roots in European vaudeville, cabaret culture, stage musicals, and operas—not only the light comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan but also, as the voice of Placido Domingo reminds us, serious Italian opera (another historic source for melodrama). Its tribute to the international musical includes localized parodic allusions to Bombay-masala films, Jacques Demy's hyper-French musical bon-bon, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,* the psychedelic animations of the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine,* and—from out back and down under—its Aussie director's own earlier lip-synched, transcultural concoctions, *Strictly Ballroom*

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Close-up on the lovers

and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. The tribute also extends to globalizing postmodernist spin-offs like music video, although nomadic hip-hop culture is conspicuously absent, perhaps because it is incompatible with this sentimental vision of romantic love.

Moulin Rouge also highlights the musical genre's dazzling visual spectacle, which privileges performance over representation. Yet it simultaneously demonstrates that our so-called visual culture, with all of its eye candy, is still mobilized and driven primarily by the sound of music, which is a crucial source of parody, pastiche, and postmodernism that is frequently overlooked in contemporary discourse. This may well be the most original dimension of the movie. For all the daring pyrotechnics of its lush visuals—the frenzied moves of the Steadicam, the kaleidoscopic spectacle of the dance numbers with their slanted camera angles and speeded-up, step-printed shots, the blatant artificiality of miniatures and digital compositing, the frantic pace of the narrative that periodically renders dialogue and plot points unintelligible, and the stylized performance of the actors—the love story still remains moving. This achievement depends on the soundtrack, which proves to be the ultimate deus ex machina, for it drives the film and controls its emotional impact. We are introduced to this dynamic in the reflexive opening sequence: the 20th Century-Fox jingle is more recognizable than its vintage visual logo, and the silhouette of the orchestra conductor in the movie palace reminds us that music was a key component of cinema from its inception.

Luhrmann demonstrates the power of music through the film's dramatic shifts in pace and rhythm—a musical concept that has driven montage and camera movement from the early days of the medium to the latest technical wizardry of digital compositing. In the opening sequence, the frantic camera moves evoke the kinetic zooms of fast-paced electronic games as they race to penetrate the inner recesses of the Moulin Rouge and then withdraw with the same accelerated rush. This reckless pace matches that of the narrative, as if this musical (like all members of its genre) were rushing to get to the good parts—not just to those spectacular ensemble performances at the Moulin Rouge where hundreds of dancers writhe within a dizzying Busby Berkeley-like design, but also to those sobering solo numbers with their huge close-ups that make

everything slow down. Even though the film frequently races ahead so that the plot is barely coherent, it also periodically pauses so that we can savor these quieter moments, whose emotional power is augmented by sheer contrast, as they are in Noh and Kabuki theater. Instead of interrupting the flow of the narrative and objectifying the performers (as Laura Mulvey has argued about such numbers, especially when performed by females), these performances and their silent pauses captured in two-dimensional fragmenting close-ups actually humanize the story and its characters. They make it easier for us to identify with these figures, even though they are often as stereotyped and one-dimensional as avatars and toons.

This rhythmic contrast and its emotional reverberations are accentuated whenever the performative pace is interrupted by the panicky breathing of the film's consumptive diva. For, as the hero Christian puts it in his narration, "a force darker than jealousy and stronger than love takes hold of Satine" and brings her voice and life to a halt. Thus the musical's real antagonists are not the stage villains (the malicious Duke and his murderous henchman), who turn out to be merely comic buffoons racing through the story like a pair of Wyle E. Coyotes, but rather the magisterial forces of Silence and Death that slow everything down.

Although visually situated in Montmartre at the turn of the century (with all of this setting's painterly associations), the film is distinguished primarily by its humorous audio pastiche: a promiscuous poaching of familiar words and music from a diverse melange of songs from different decades that acquire new meaning within this new narrative context. This technique of renarrativizing popular songs can be traced back to eighteenth-century ballad opera (a British genre that was a key source for musical comedy) and more specifically to John Gay's successful *The Beggar's Opera,* which was the source for Brecht and Weill's satiric *Threepenny Opera*. Luhrmann, however, unlike Brecht and Gay, retains the original lyrics along with the tune, a strategy that makes it almost impossible for spectators to miss the poaching (even if they cannot name the particular source). A similar strategy was used by Dennis Potter in his brilliant teleplays *Pennies from Heaven* and *The Singing Detective*, but his ironic contrasts between the light-hearted pop music and the vicious murder and psychic mayhem it accompanied gave the renarrativization a cutting edge, and the vintage nature of his borrowed songs infused the combination with a nostalgic sense of longing. Potter's strategy was also pursued by Alain Resnais in his film musical *On connaît la chanson* (*Same Old Song,* 1997), where the combinations were not as jarring as Potter's, but moved in the same direction.

In contrast, Luhrmann's renarrativized lyrics are never disturbing, for they are usually more innocent here than in their original source, and that's precisely the point. The gap in historical periods (between the supposed vintage of his characters and the obvious youth of their songs) freely acknowledges the contemporary nature of this vision of Parisian modernism without any trace of nostalgia. It is a blatant act of ventriloquism that justifies the genre's widespread use of lip-synching and voice doubles and that says far more about the period in which the film was made than the period it depicts. And in the wake of recent tragic events, the historical moment of the film's production now seems all the more innocent, even if that innocence was merely the kind of illusion that frivolous musicals help to maintain.

Once Luhrmann's hero arrives in turn-of-the-century Paris, the proverbial international center for modernism, with the puritanical voice of his disapproving father still ringing in his ears, this historical representation is immediately ruptured by a postmodernist intervention. Descending from above like a pantheon of dei ex machina, an anonymous Argentine narcoleptic drops through the ceiling of the hero's hotel room accompanied by a dwarf dressed as a nun (one of Buñuel's favorite disguises) and by others in their entourage. They are collaborating on a musical play called "Spectacular Spectacular," which they hope to pitch to Harold Zidler (Jim Broadbent), the director of the legendary Moulin Rouge. Despite the zaniness of this gaggle of artists, who perform like a Surrealist version of the Marx Brothers, the dwarf (Puerto Rican comic actor and comedian John Leguizamo) turns out to be the painter Toulouse-Lautrec. Though he claims to be pursuing "a true Bohemian revolutionary aesthetics," he actually parodies the classical theatrical traditions of the deus ex machina and chorus.

The Anglo hero Christian is played by Ewan McGregor, veteran of Peter Greenaway's *Pillow Book,* where he played the ultimate rewritable Brit. He immediately doubles for the ailing Argentine, not only replacing him as the writer of the inset musical but also casting the narcoleptic to play his own fictional "piteously poor artist" alter ego. In both outer and inner story, the poor artist falls in love with a beautiful French courtesan named Satine, skillfully played by Hollywood superstar Nicole Kidman, whose Australian roots are recuperated through her collaboration with Luhrmann. Since the writer figure is transformed into

Satine as the Indian courtesan

a sitar player, the Argentine must change his medium from word to music and his ethnicity from Latino to Indian, but he still manages to import the tango, at a dramatic moment in the outer story, to stylize sex and violence into dance. In both stories, the courtesan temporarily mistakes the poor artist for the rich villain—a French Duke or Indian Maharaja—whom she is paid to seduce and who eventually finances the show and divides the lovers.

The film highlights the mobility of these melodramatic stereotypes which, like the poached lyrics—and the popular genres of melodrama and musical—so easily navigate across cultures, periods, and media. Such mobility implies not only that no movie genre can be confined within national boundaries (not even those vigilantly guarded yet wide-reaching transnational borders of the U.S.A.), but that the ongoing history and fate of every genre can be greatly enriched and reinvigorated by this kind of daring transcultural dialogue and exchange. Such enrichment is most palpable in the finale, the premiere performance of the inset play, which is set in India and which opens with a virtual explosion of vibrant color like an Indian Bollywood musical. On stage we see a diverse mass of writhing bodies that contrast sharply with the uniformly black-tuxedoed European male audience on the other side of the lights. The only recognizable spectator among them is the villainous Duke in the front row.

Within the film's complex narrative entanglements, plot points are frequently driven by songs, which also move fluidly across borders between cultures, periods, genres, and tones. For example, Christian is hired to replace the Argentine writer only after he contributes the perfect line of dialogue to the script-in-progress—a line which the other characters have never previously heard but which all of us in Luhrmann's audience probably know: "The hills are alive with the sound of music." It is the mantra that transforms the spoken dialogue into song. Christian also produces a string of love lyrics poached from other songs familiar to moviegoers, including "Love is a many splendored thing" and "All you need is love." This medley creates a kaleidoscopic effect on the musical track, which triggers the kaleidoscopic visual performance of "The Sound of Music" by a Tinkerbell-Ariel fairy who prefigures Satine's equally kaleidoscopic entrance in the Moulin Rouge extravaganza that follows. This is the first time we see the power of popular lyrics in action: their ability to link spoken dialogue with music, trigger the release of spectacular visuals, and temporarily slow down the pace so that a rhythmic shift can refocus the story on the next step in the romance.

The renarrativization of poached lyrics also helps to negotiate the relationship between this particular story and its generic conventions. Although the familiar lyrics connect this story and its performers to

Spectacular Satine descending

legions of others from the same genre, the song's unique presentation here in close-ups still makes the words and singer emotionally moving. We encounter this dynamic in the introduction of Satine during the first spectacular number at the Moulin Rouge; she descends on a swing amid a sparkling snowfall of glitter in slow motion that prepares us for the startling extreme close-up of her ultra-white, ruby-lipped, blue-eyed face. As she sings "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," with a brief musical detour to "Material Girl," she harnesses the erotic power of those earlier formidable sirens (Jane Russell, Marilyn Monroe, and the latter's simulacrum, Madonna) associated with these songs, and thereby positions herself within a familiar paradigm of paramours. Yet the singularity of Satine's solo performance is accentuated by the hundreds of Diamond Dog dancers who surround her. With their gypsy dwarves and homo-erotic tattooed men, they exhibit an astonishingly colorful array of nationalities, races, costumes, bodies, and sexualities—a diversity that sharply contrasts with the legion of black top hats being thrown in the air by the white heterosexual male audience. One spectator is singled out for special attention: the Duke is introduced as the stereotypical rich suitor while he lip-synchs the refrain, "Diamonds are a girl's best friend." At first this makes him seem a playful variation on Laurence Olivier's Prince (who similarly fell for Marilyn in *The Prince and the Showgirl*), but he becomes more threatening once we meet his murderous henchman, who just happens to be named Warner (like the movie studio), thus rendering the romantic rivalry reflexive in this musical from 20th Century-Fox.

There is a silent moment at the climax of this frenzied opening performance when the astonishing Satine grows faint and falls from her swing, to be caught by an equally singular black giant, who seems to come out of nowhere (unless we consider the orientalist colonial heritage that groomed him to serve a white goddess). As the first sign of her illness, this false move prefigures Satine's ultimate fate in "Spectacular Spec-

tacular"—dying on stage in mid-song. This opening performance, like that of an opera or ballet, thus functions as an overture that synthesizes the musical narrative that follows. In case we are unfamiliar with the generic conventions of the musical, it lets us know what will happen so that, as with any myth, we can concentrate not on what happens next, but on the unique inflection with which the familiar moves are performed. This strategy provides a pleasurable and reassuring combination of familiarity and surprise; for we may recognize the music and the lyrics but still wonder with curiosity and anticipation how they will be uniquely adapted to this tale.

The lyrics also have power to control the rich palette of color in the painterly costuming and mise-en-scène. For example, the contrast between the dominant reds and blues is sometimes blurred by the songs, creating a synesthesia that links back to opera. At first we are struck by the luscious reds of the Moulin Rouge decor and costuming—particularly those gaping ruffled skirts of the can-can dancers, which recuperate their original erotic shock value even for twentyfirst-century viewers—and those diagnostic droplets of bright crimson blood on Satine's handkerchief that link her back to the consumptive Camille of cinema and her musical roots in *La Traviata*. These livid reds are contrasted with the moody blues of Christian's impoverished hotel room in Montmartre, where their love is finally consummated. In the scene in Satine's dressing room after her first number, where she mistakes Christian for the Duke, the comic convention of mistaken identity suddenly dissolves at the magic moment when the spoken words merge into song ("And you can tell everyone that this is your song"). And this musical emotional rupture is expressed through color: as the young lovers fly out into the moonlit night and the Méliès-like moon joins their song with the voice of Placido Domingo, Satine's red hair softens to brown and her red dress turns a moody blue. This same synesthetic effect recurs when Christian later joins Satine (still in her red dress) atop the roof of her dressing room, and another romantic medley (including the Beatles refrain, "All you need is love," and Whitney Houston's signature line, "I will always love you") makes the red tones blur back into blue. Once more the operatic moon chimes in, and the voyeuristic Lautrec (cast in the inset play as a musical instrument, a magic sitar that can only tell the truth) echoes their secret refrain: "How wonderful life is, now you're in the world."

As illustrated in this pair of matched sequences, the entire film is structured by a series of repetitive performances that create a dizzying spiral of doubling. This pattern is accentuated by the soundtrack's poached lyrics and echoing refrains; by the visual technique of step-printing; by the plot's many theatrical rehearsals, flashbacks, and chain of dei ex machina; and by the doublet title of the inset musical "Spectacular Spectacular" that mirrors the outer love story.

The can-can dancers

The Méliès moon

The film is book-ended by a pair of matching frames: from the reflexive setting of a vintage movie palace, with opening curtains that reveal the now retro 20th Century-Fox logo, the shot leads deeper inward to the historic setting of Paris in 1900 and to the framing song (David Bowie's rendition of Nat King Cole's classic "Nature Boy": "There was a boy, a very strange enchanted boy"). The song is lip-synched on the sidelines by a white-faced clown whom we later recognize as Leguizamo doing Lautrec, and it introduces the writer/protagonist Christian, who sits in his Montmartre hotel room at his typewriter tapping out his sad tale of love. This leads into the flashback dramatization of that story within the highly artificial theatrical space of the Moulin Rouge, where the inset musical will ultimately be performed. Following that final performance, a reverse movement quickly leads outward and back through all of those successive layers to the closing credits.

Within this invaginated structure, Christian's tragic tale of love is framed, in turn, by two spectacular numbers: the first show in the old Moulin Rouge, where the hero sees and falls for Satine, and the premiere performance of "Spectacular Spectacular" in the new Moulin Rouge, where the consumptive diva dies on stage in her lover's arms. In contrast to the opening number, when she descended from above, she now rises from the underworld below, thus foreshadowing her death. In both scenes she is guarded by the giant black actor, a silent androgynous figure who in the final performance appears in blue body paint as the Hindu god Krishna, embodying both life and death. This time Satine is the mortal and he's the god—the "force darker than jealousy and stronger than love"—who takes hold of her. As her singing is interrupted by coughing, her face turns blue—not only signaling her move toward Krishna, but also giving new resonance to the blue tones of her romance with Christian. Similarly, at both ends, the story is watched over by the clownish dwarf Lautrec in whiteface (which evokes the extreme pallor of Satine's face in her first number). This time he performs his dual role as chorus and deus ex machina by falling from the theater's overhead catwalk just in time to lip-synch the key line from "Nature Boy": "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return." Thus these two dei ex machina, the chattering white dwarf and the mute black giant, dramatize the ongoing struggle between Eros and Thanatos.

Between these two spectacular numbers there is a doubling of key sequences, including Satine's double seduction of Christian and the Duke, her two romantic meetings with Christian atop her elephant dressing room, and her two abortive dinner rendezvous with the Duke. Both these potentially disastrous dinners are in-

tercut with parodic musical numbers that accentuate melodrama's Manichean lurches between misery and humor, lightness and dark. The first is triggered by a question posed to Zidler by the Duke: Why did Satine suddenly have to go to mass instead of to supper? Madonna's song pops into mind: "Because you make her feel like a virgin, touched for the very first time"—a poached line of dialogue that leads into the film's best musical parody, which is intercut with a serious love scene between Christian and Satine. Masquerading as a virginal bride, Zidler grabs a pair of aspics to simulate Madonna-esque breasts and casts the Duke, garbed in his swirling black cape, as his vampiric groom. As the bridal couple dances atop the ivories of a grand piano, they are backed up by a chorus line of waiters opening bottles of orgasmic-popping champagne.

Whereas this first dinner party is dominated by humor, the second turns somber, for this is the sequence where Satine is seriously threatened with rape. The intercut number is a tango in which the Argentine actor tells a cautionary tale for men who fall in love with prostitutes—a story that leads into the pop song "Roxanne." Though it starts out by featuring one gypsy woman (the treacherous performer who betrays Satine and Christian to the Duke), it soon leads into a troop of dancers whose numbers keep growing, making things look increasingly ominous for Satine. Yet the singular couple is posed against this legion of stereotypes, a relation that is mediated by the song and dance and the genre. Ultimately, Satine is saved not by the Eros of her Christian lover nor by the intruding tango (which still lie within the conventions of Western melodrama), but by the more powerful force of Thanatos, which is echoed in the secret song ("Come what may, I will love you till I die") and channeled by the silent black strongman, who punches out the Duke and moves inexorably toward becoming the living incarnation of death.

Luhrmann's witty combination of historical specificity and promiscuous pastiche also demonstrates the musical genre's flagrant violations and disavowals of history. Paradoxically, such violations are most blatant in those melodramatic musicals that take the greatest pains to evoke a particular historical period, as in *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music,* or even in John Huston's earlier *Moulin Rouge* (whose plot is here eschewed, despite Luhrmann's title, in favor of the earlier Garbo melodrama, *Camille*). Luhrmann's chain of simulations and quotations implies there can be no original or even stable referent in musicals, a position that is also suggested by the Elton John lyric, "I'm writing this song for *you*," whose referent drifted so conveniently from Marilyn to Princess Diana, and is now readily reassigned to Nicole as the consumptive Satine. Starting with Bowie's rendition of "Nature Boy," the film encourages us to become textual poachers ourselves and to purposely "queer the text." In this way, it frees us to come up with our own new historical referents, like the easy substitution of AIDS for TB as the driving force of doom that is far more formidable than any stage villain, at least at this particular point of reception and consumption.

This interactive mode of reception is also encouraged through the musical evocation of real-life pop figures, who can readily be substituted for the fictional main characters (the way the poor sitar player is substituted for the songwriter in the inset play, or the Indian Maharaja for the French Duke). Through its ubiquitous allusions, the film nominates contemporary pop figures who were martyred by death (John Lennon), or transformed by love (Madonna), or elevated by writing song lyrics (Sir Elton John), or who risked career for a dangerous love (Whitney Houston). The film's characters and star personae, like the reigning disease, are not three-dimensional realistic representations but avatars that can be embodied by different players and viruses, as new styles, techniques, and antibodies are designed and old songs are rearranged for new performers who reinscribe their meanings. Even a unique historic figure like Lautrec can be reimagined through the comic talents of Leguizamo, whose performance purposely rejects authenticity and deliberately contrasts with that of José Ferrer, who played the painter as a brooding protagonist in Huston's earlier melodrama. For in this new twentyfirst-century version of *Moulin Rouge,* Lautrec is reduced to a dwarfish alter ego for the Anglo hero, a change that subordinates history to fiction, Romance languages to English, and visualization to music.

Yet Luhrmann's film reminds us that no matter which genre, medium, or culture they hail from, all avatars (like melodramatic stereotypes and tunes) can be endlessly recycled at the ever-shifting point of consumption. And although their melodramatic plots and conventions may be as old as the hills, the genre of the musical and the medium of cinema will remain alive in the twentyfirst century—so long as we keep hearing and seeing, replaying and rewriting, the visually spectacular sound of music.

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Book Reviews

The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini

His Life and Films

By Tag Gallagher. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. $24.50.

There is something endearing and endlessly fascinating about this book. It is also unsettling and (at 802 pages) relentless. The length can be accounted for in part by the fact that it is several kinds of book rolled into one. Intended first and foremost as a biography, *The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini* is also a production history of the director's films, and a history of their critical reception, of their later reputation, and of their influence. Gallagher also submits accounts of the intellectual and ideological contexts from which Rossellini's films emerged, and includes two chapters on the theory of Neorealism. I may be overlooking some components, but even so one must admire the challenge the author set himself. Gallagher's evident desire to look into everything he could possibly find about the director (whom he greatly admires) tends to win the reader over, while the massive amount of detail he provides is sure to fascinate anyone who has an interest in Rossellini. The book is thus useful for those who have not seen some of the director's films (seeing them all is a difficult undertaking at best, given the vagaries of international distribution), as well as for those who can't quite remember some of the details. Most of these materials have been available for years, widely scattered among European publications, many of them even in English. But for those who prefer to read about Italian cinema in one place and in English (Gallagher provides translations for the sources that are not), I know of no one other book where so much information is currently available. Peter Brunette's excellent *Roberto Rossellini* (Oxford University Press, 1987) is the only other major treatment of the director with claims to completeness. It differs from Gallagher's study in that it is not a biography, it does not treat the films' production history, its references to critical reception are subordinate to the author's argument, and its readings of the films are—the author's disclaimers notwithstanding—articulated and focused through a strong and selective authorial perspective.

By contrast, Gallagher's film readings rely for the most part on extensive collages of critical discussions ranging from the intelligent to the trivial, from the appreciative to the hostile. This provides a vivid picture of Rossellini's difficult and contentious experience with critics and intellectuals, but what one misses is a consistent and recognizable authorial perspective to help us navigate through this cacophony. By the same token, the materials Gallagher uses to explain the context of Italian intellectual trends such as Marxism, Catholic thought, and the politics of Italy are superficial and inadequate. The history of Rossellini's critical reception, given ample space in the book, makes little sense unless the voices that Gallagher weaves together are contextualized well beyond tagging their owners as "Communist Baldelli" and "Catholic Roncoroni." Gramsci gets 17 lines in the chapters about Neorealism. Is Luigi Barzini really the person we want to question about the tensions between Italian Catholicism and Marxism?

As for the biographical data, Gallagher seems to have included everything and, dare I say, the kitchen sink as well. One way or another, biography is a narrative genre, and Gallagher knows this. Yet because he too rigidly enforces the principle of chronology, even the temporal flow of events is hard to discern. It is disruptive to read about the making of a film, then the release and critical reception of the previous one, then the making of the next film, then the critical reception of the film that came before—especially when other types of material are inserted between these blocks of film history. There are also very different "kinds" of lives that fit into different kinds of narrative, not to speak of the subject's own thoughts and attitudes about his own life in biographical perspective. Rossellini view of himself was informed by the fact that he saw himself as a particular kind of artist; he had an awareness of his own presence in his films; a view of his place in the world and his relations to others. Yet one seeks in vain for Gallagher's response to Rossellini's own master discourse. Then there is a man's life as others see it. From this perspective, in the view of many, it seems that Rossellini was a nasty piece of work. A veritable gaggle of voices, cited in this book, are all too eager to let us know about it. Many of these voices derive from letters written to Gallagher (at his request, it seems) by a variety of people—friends, relatives, victims, and bystanders—most of whom appear to have their own ax to grind. It would have been helpful to hear of the possible motives behind their testimonies.

Occasionally Gallagher provides evocative descriptions of Rossellini's personal life couched in vividly anecdotal terms: the "day like any other" that precedes Rossellini's death (685) is a case in point, as well as his encounter with the future directors of the French New Wave (458-60). All too often, however, the serial accumulations of details scattered over the whole book are confusing in their similarity and, given their distance from one another in the text, don't coalesce into a coherent narrative. How exactly and when did Rossellini fail to live up to his contractual commitments? What was his working method, and how did it evolve? Worse, the reiteration of censorious claims (do we really need the unnerving refrain about Ingrid Bergman's drinking problem?) smacks of tendentious overdetermination. Not to speak of a mass of details that serve no obvious purpose: Do I really want to know about Isabella's spine surgery? Do I need to know how Aldo Tonti was cooking spaghetti as Rossellini outlined one of his projects? Often good information is easily missed, surrounded as it is by data whose relevance and purpose are not clear.

For one thing, the "genres" and source types that Gallagher folds into his book require very different kinds of attention and deserve very different levels of intellectual respect. The biographical sections of the book are based on

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sources vastly divergent in their level of seriousness and reliability. Uncritically intermingled with reliable data are sections deriving from the Italian equivalent of fan magazines and tabloid journalism (*Arianna, Epoca, Tempo*) and from claims culled from self-serving memories such as those found in *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano raccontata dai suoi protagonisti* (a multi-volume gathering of informal reminiscences provided by the protagonists of Italy's film history), not to speak of "facts" cited from trade book memoirs and ghosted autobiographies. Biographical sections also often provide unnecessary details (a tourist guide to Parisian restaurants [572] or Ingrid and Roberto's guest list in Capri [384]), or a tone I would not expect to find in a biography that wants to be taken seriously: "Roberto knew, however, that Magnani was a devouring whirlpool of insecurity, lust, and fury, and that for a free spirit such as himself, to love her was to court insanity, all the more so since he himself was in despair. . . . But part of him craved insanity" (229).

It is symptomatic of such problems that using the book's dense index as a table of contents makes Gallagher's Rossellini study much clearer. Doing so, however, reveals that important elements of Rossellini's work, while often mentioned, fail to be elaborated. Rossellini's development and early use of the Pancinor lens, for example, would seem to offer an opportunity to discuss an unusually transparent correspondence between a director's work and the technology at his disposal (in this case, equipment actually developed by the artist). Gallagher's help would have been welcome in deciding between readings such as the one I mention and those provided by the gossip of family and friends, cited by Gallagher as saying that the lens was just a way for Rossellini to be even lazier than before . . . and a better cheapskate as well.

Many other recurring topics that appear to receive substantive attention as they echo each other across the book turn out to be treated quite superficially once we track them through the index. Some of them would seem to be fundamental to Gallagher's argument. This is so with his belabored case about Rossellini and the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce. Those of us who grew up in postwar Italy know all too well the intellectual fog created by those who in Croce's name purvey high-sounding vagueness. This is not to say that intelligent and appropriate use of Croce does not occur in contemporary Italian culture. But it does mean that he who tags Rossellini's films as derived from or informed by Croce's philosophy must provide more than generic allusions (widely applicable to others at that) such as: "the only truth that matters is personal truth" (556) and "a good crocean, Rossellini's camera inquires with a purpose" (578). Failing more precision, what Gallagher attributes to an educated use of Croce by Rossellini can be accounted for by the chorality of Crocean cant surrounding the director. The Rossellini who, Gallagher tells us, suddenly emerged in 1952 as "Rossellini the thinker" and who provided "public evidence of his brilliance in discussing his work" (379) should be taken with a grain of salt.

As I said earlier, Gallagher's book will be useful in a variety of ways and it is often delightful to read. The author's enthusiasm for Rossellini is contagious and leads to sections (the chapter about *Voyage in Italy* comes to mind) that are informative and insightful. Gallagher himself, I must add in all fairness, warns us at the outset of the dangers inherent in the kind of book he has written. He cites Gerald Mast, who apparently told him when he began that "biography is fiction." He adds, "I did not believe him then; I do now," and proceeds to describe the problems inherent in his source materials (x). Perhaps he should indeed have written a fictional work informed by what is solidly known and sensibly thought of Rossellini. As it is, Gallagher should have heeded better the citation he provides at the opening of his chapter about *Voyage to Italy*. It is from Simone Weil, who is quoted as saying: "To write the lives of the great in separating them from their works necessarily ends by above all stressing their pettiness."

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The Films of Fritz Lang

Allegories of Vision and Modernity

By Tom Gunning. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press/British Film Institute, 1999. $24.95.

M

By Anton Kaes. Berkeley. CA: University of California Press/BFI Classics, 2000. $12.95.

Recently the films of Fritz Lang have enjoyed the renewed interest of cinema scholars. In addition to the books under review here, an anthology, *Fritz Lang's Metropolis: Cinematic Views of Technology and Fear*, has appeared from Camden House, and the BFI Classics series features a monograph on *Metropolis* by Thomas Elsaesser. They follow in the wake of Patrick McGilligan's 1997 biography, *Fritz Lang: the Nature of the Beast*. These new books are complemented by the recent restoration of *M,* now commercially available with English subtitles on film and in a full range of video formats.

Tom Gunning's *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* makes a stellar contribution to this revival. This long (528 pages) and detailed commentary on Lang's films will immediately assume a leading position in the study of this celebrated filmmaker and will serve as a landmark in authorship criticism in the cinema. Here the author of *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Cinema* moves away from his more familiar work on early cinema. But his interest in Lang is hardly new, as he reports on a meeting with the director in 1970, near the beginning of his own scholarly career and at the close of the filmmaker's life.

In the preface Gunning stakes out his task of interpretation. While acknowledging that such a critical enterprise is out of fashion in some leading circles of film scholarship, the author affirms that "it forms an essential aspect of our

encounter with works of art" (ix). Furthermore, Gunning claims that the "premature abandonment [of author-studies] has stunted the growth of a dynamic film criticism" (x). The work of Lang particularly solicits interpretation, Gunning argues, because many of his major silent films pose an allegory which by its very nature requires interpretation. The author goes even further in asserting that silent film is dominated by the allegorical mode. As a result, this study is firmly focused on the description, analysis, and significance of Lang's films. Though details of production, reception, biography, collaboration, and influence all come into play, they are subordinated to an understanding of the evolution of the principal motifs and themes expressed by Lang's films. However, Gunning avoids a simplistic understanding of authorship, but rather finds the filmmaker to be in a constant, and often futile, struggle to command the complex processes, powerful institutions, and contending personalities involved in film production. "Lang's authorship is not reducible to a romantic, idealistic notion of genius," writes Gunning. "It is rather a modern process in which the author bears the imprint of society, technology and history" (477). Gunning is judicious and sensitive in portraying this struggle and in evaluating the play of forces underlying motion pictures.

Gunning looks to Fritz Lang's German compatriots in the Frankfurt School, particularly the school's fellow travelers such as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer, as a "constant guide to my thinking" (x). Indeed, Benjamin's understanding of allegory and modernity is in play throughout the text. The book is also incisive and judicious in tracing the influence of Bertolt Brecht on Lang's cinema, finding its presence most forceful in *M* or *You and Me* rather than in their one collaboration, *Hangmen Also Die* (1943). Although he directed the majority of his films in Hollywood, Lang's German heritage exercises a much more conspicuous influence on his films than is evident in other émigrés, such as Ernst Lubitsch or Billy Wilder.

The Films of Fritz Lang analyzes 20 of Lang's films in 18 chapter-length commentaries; single chapters cover *Liliom*/*Fury* and *While the City Sleeps*/*Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*. The German filmmaker's career is subdivided into related clusters of works: Part I: Reading the Text of Death—Lang's Silent Allegories: *Der müde Tod* (1921), *Die Nibelungen* (1924), *Metropolis* (1927); Part II: The Mastery of Crime—Lang's Urban Thrillers: *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* (1922), *Spies* (1928), *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1932); Part III: Hinge—*M* (1931); Part IV: Fritz Lang's America—The Social Trilogy: *Fury* (1936), *You Only Live Once* (1937), *You and Me* (1938); Part V: Framing Desire: *The Woman in the Window* (1944), *Scarlet Street* (1945), *The Secret Beyond the Door* (1948), *House by the River* (1950); Part VI: The 50s Exposés and Lang's Last Testament: *The Blue Gardenia* (1953), *The Big Heat* (1953), *While the City Sleeps* (1955), *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1956), *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960). Though only just over half of Lang's films are given extended treatment, most of the other works, from *The Spiders* (1919-20) to *The Indian Tomb* (1959), are discussed in passing; some, such as *Rancho Notorious* (1952), receive pages of commentary. You can easily benefit from reading individual chapters on a particular film; however, in doing so, you would miss the fascinating evolution Lang's work undergoes and the referential network which invests the filmmaker's career with a complexity captured by no single production. Gunning organizes his book not simply around the films that he judges to be the hallmark of Lang's achievement, but in response to the central issues driving these works.

The subtitle, "Allegories of Vision and Modernity," points to generative ideas Gunning finds at play throughout the German filmmaker's career. The specter of death and the dead hangs over these stories, but an important transition occurs in the move from the legendary fables, such as *Die Nibelungen,* to the modern urban milieu. Gunning finds that it is not a metaphysical fate that constrains Lang's characters but rather the "Destiny-machine," a force arising from the institutions, technology, and practices shaping modern life, which exercises control over men and women in spite of its human source. The surveillance imposed by these modern institutions and their attendant technology, whether legitimate or criminal, undermines the identity and sabotages the hope of the men and women populating Lang's cinema. The visionary experience arises when the protagonist achieves a relevatory but shattering realization of the forces commanding experience. The hubris of master criminals like Dr. Mabuse arises from their attempt to master the Destiny-machine in their drive for power; similarly the artists, such as Chris Cross in *Scarlet Street* or Stephen Byrne in *House by the River,* contest the Destiny-machine to their ruin. "The undoing of an author-like character, an enunciator who hubristically seems to control the unfolding of the film's story, whether Lang's master criminals or his artists who try to capture the object of their desire in an image, forms the core of Lang's *oeuvre*," writes Gunning (452).

These ideas may sound familiar to those schooled in the films of Fritz Lang and the critical literature generated in their wake. Indeed, Gunning displays a thorough understanding of Lang scholarship in English, French, and German and makes generous acknowledgements to those who have preceded him. But, while carefully establishing a field of reference for understanding Lang, Gunning also takes issue with critics, even those he holds in high esteem, with whom he disagrees. He affirms the importance of Lang's Hollywood productions in the face of Noël Burch's dismissal, and refines the treatment of the gaze developed by Stephen Jenkins. One point, however, upon which consensus only grows is the paramount status of *M* among Lang's films. Among others, Gunning acknowledges that Anton Kaes's "brilliant" study of *M* influenced his understanding. The study Gunning refers to precedes the recent monograph on Lang's masterpiece written for the BFI Film Classics series. Indeed, Gunning anticipates this new publication with relish. I couldn't agree more.

One of the most satisfying aspects of Kaes's monograph and Gunning's authorial interpretation is how well they complement each other. Whereas Gunning's treatment of *M* high-

lights an interpretation built around the developing stylistic patterns and thematic concerns that distinguished Lang's films throughout the post-World War I years, Kaes concentrates on recreating the broader cultural context from which *M* arose. He sets out to "reconstruct the discourses which circulated through the film" in 1931 and grounds the production firmly in its historical base (7). The book traces the production history of the film; reviews the cases of notorious Weimar serial killers, emphasizing their impact on popular culture; argues persuasively for a network of references and parallels to the German experience of World War I, and portrays the documentary impulse in the film's numerous references to current events in Germany on the verge of the Nazi takeover. Finally, Kaes discusses the film's resurrection in a Hollywood remake in 1951, produced once again by Seymour Nebenzal, now directed by Joseph Losey after Lang turned down the opportunity to revise his classic. Kaes refers to unpublished notes Lang took in the course of production, reprints for the first time a written description of a six-minute scene missing from extant prints, and reports on the film's reception in the press. An added treat is lushly printed black-and-white illustrations of exceptional quality for a paperback publication. Kaes succeeds admirably in his historical endeavor and contributes one of the best monographs in the BFI series.

Kaes and Gunning agree that *M* acts as the "hinge" of Lang's career, but for me Gunning's most illuminating chapter is on *Scarlet Street,* "possibly Lang's Hollywood masterpiece" (324). Maybe the pathos of this film is so unnerving that my appreciation was crippled, and I protected myself from the pain by affirming a preference for Jean Renoir's *La Chienne* (1931), with which it shares a common source. Gunning's careful study opened a depth of expression which forced me to reconsider my experience of the film and proved to be profoundly illuminating. First, he tackled my prejudice head-on by pursuing a sensitive comparison of the matched productions of Lang and Renoir. The commentary opens out into a broad contrast in the modes of expression of two master filmmakers, quite satisfying in itself. Then Gunning undertakes a Freudian interpretation—while acknowledging the sins so often cloaked under the rubric of psychoanalysis—as the best means of understanding the complex play of repression and eroticism, art-making and identity embodied in the film's doomed protagonist, Chris Cross. The author successfully portrays a powerful psychological exchange between Chris, Kitty, the woman who exploits him, and Johnny, her brutal pimp. The psychic undertow is pointedly brought to bear in reference to Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" as a means of explaining the aftermath of Kitty's murder and Johnny's execution. The visionary conclusion of Chris confronting his "Self-Portrait" of Kitty in a display window carries a haunting evocation beautifully explicated in the text. Gunning's commentary also draws upon the history of Diana Productions and a crucial excised scene during which Chris watches from outside the prison for the sign of Johnny's execution. The interpretation eloquently combines an understanding of film style, the history of a production and its reception, the trajectory of authorship, and a penetrating psychological framework to explain the achievement of this frequently neglected film.

For all of its pleasures, *The Films of Fritz Lang* carries liabilities. Though Gunning's prose is straightforward, the precision of his interpretation requires extended passages of description. The benefit is that even in films I haven't seen, such as *House by the River,* the vivid review of the movie sustains the argument. However, in the later minor works, such as *While the City Sleeps,* even the condensed treatment can seem repetitive and tiresome. The approach, however, demands a commitment to Lang probably limited to film scholars. This book is not going to convert the unanointed or entertain the casual enthusiast, but for those devoted to Fritz Lang, the task of film interpretation, or the challenge of authorship criticism, Tom Gunning's new book will be prized for years to come.

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Lost Illusions

American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970–1979

By David A. Cook. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1999. $90.00/University of California Press, 2002. $29.95.

In history, sometimes, traditional representations of events turn out to be more plausible than historical revisionism would like. For instance, in the case of American cinema of the 1970s, it has been typical to concentrate on two developments: the flourishing of a New Hollywood cinema driven by auteurs and given over to a cynical view of the American dream, and the subsequent rise of a corporate-driven mega-hit entertainment model that would glide easily into the conservative cinema of the Reagan era. This is the received view of things, and while we might want to nuance its details, it is probably not wrong in its overall configuration.

The power of David Cook's study of the film industry in the decade of the 1970s comes then not so much from some sort of revolutionary revision of this historical model as from the bold and deepened analysis it offers of the known facts and narratives. It also goes further than any previous study has done in mastering the full range of such facts and narratives: this is a book of impressive research which eschews vague impressions for a rigorous look at industry documents and publications, among other sources of information. (Full disclosure: a longtime fan of his work, I read Cook's book in manuscript, offered various comments along the way, and am thanked for that aid in the acknowledgments. I loved the book then, and I love it now.)

In keeping with other recent volumes in the Scribner's series, Cook has delegated discussion of issues outside the

production of mainstream film to other scholars: specifically, Douglas Gomery, who looks at changing patterns of exhibition in the 1970s (a discussion that among other things is a veritable history of the impact television and new home-recording technologies had on conditions of film viewing), William Rothman on documentary film in the period (an analysis that is also quite polemical vis-à-vis other theorists of documentary), and Robin Blaetz on avant-garde experimentation. Gomery's contribution is particularly illuminating in the ways it picks up a central point of Cook's chapters: namely, that as the film industry rebounded from crisis, television became a nodal part of its strategy of revitalization. For Gomery, just as for Cook, film in the 1970s increasingly becomes something that doesn't need theatrical exhibition and can be cultivated through other lucrative venues, such as the home video market. Interestingly, the argument that film is a mobile medium which can be shown in any number of formats anticipates the next volume in the Scribner's series, Stephen Prince's *A Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* [reviewed in *FQ* vol. 55, no. 2. Ed.], which takes to the next stage the dissolution by a globalizing entertainment industry of cinema as a specific practice automatically associated with specific venues of presentation. The history that these last two volumes of the series recounts is among other things an account of the disappearance of a classic notion of the cinema object.

Cook's breakthrough in this volume comes primarily from the ways he figures the interrelation of the two key developments in 1970s American film around auteurism and industry reconsolidation. In particular, rather than seeing the experiments of auteur cinema and the commercial conservatism of the corporations as being in inevitable opposition, Cook productively suggests that Hollywood was able to make it through the 1970s and solidify its place in the synergies of new entertainment by gleaning and putting to commercial use the lessons of alternative narrative cinemas such as those practiced by auteurs, low-budget entrepreneurs, and regional filmmakers. For example, the blockbuster cinema that dominated the latter half of the decade learned that prestige films for the modern age had not to reject populist entertainment such as low-genre cinema but to incorporate it into its entertainment machine and give it the gloss of the big-budget event. Thus the division in the classic cinema between A pictures and B pictures became confused as the mega-hit cinema of the late 1970s borrowed story and style as well as exhibition strategy (for example, four-walling) and advertising technique (for example, the exploitative "hook") from the realm of B-cinema. Likewise, Cook shows how the new studio system, instead of seeing auteurs as flies in the ointment of the well-greased machinery of mainstream production, found ways to appropriate and incorporate them, exploiting their prestige and utilizing their unique traits to give films distinction (and thereby appeal to niche audiences such as urban intellectuals). Cook's volume joins a burgeoning tradition in film history—visible, also, in a contribution like Jon Lewis's recent *Hollywood v. Hardcore*—that looks less at "the genius of the system" as some sort of ineffable creativity than at its resilience, its ability to respond to both crisis and challenge by incorporating them and exploiting them as marketable innovation.

Ironically perhaps, at the very moment of 1970s industry consolidation—for example, that of a horizontal integration between different branches of the entertainment business—film study itself came to be dominated by textual approaches that turned attention to the workings of films more than to the business structures that produced them (and led to mutations in their very identity). Only now perhaps can the turn to a historiography of institutions enable us to see the complexity of what was transpiring in the decade. If in the 1980s and 1990s a cultural-studies emphasis led film scholarship to concentrate on resistance at the point of reception of cultural practices, a hard look back, such as Cook provides, at the 1970s—with their increasingly resilient industrial strategies—has the quite salutary effect of reminding us that reception studies need to be tempered by an attention to political economy and to the networks of control over production, distribution, and even consumption. This was clearly a decade of intensive consolidation of an industry, one that had been going through a box-office crisis at the beginning of the period, and it is necessary to recognize the massive and widespread effects (including effects on content and form and on their reception) that industry retrenchment around the idea of the blockbuster entailed.

The high-concept film that opened wide, reunited audiences (often around their common infantilization), and disarmed criticism by its pretension to be "only entertainment" is the central focus of Cook's study: he shows both its textual qualities (for example, enthralling special effects and engulfing sound design) and the complicated but highly rationalized industrial strategies that determined that textuality. Ultimately, what began as retrenchment became with the success of blockbusters an ambitious expansion. Cook provides a detailed examination of the major production firms of the 1970s and chronicles how many of them became mere subsidiaries of larger conglomerates (whether fully devoted to cultural production or diversified into a number of other sectors as well).

This is not to say that there isn't room for analysis of audiences or of the ways that 1960s ferment was transformed in the 1970s into a concern with filmmaking practices—even in the heart of Hollywood—that eschewed the narrative models of the classical Hollywood system. Indeed, one of Cook's best discussions is of the ways in which the 1970s saw an explosion of films that rewrote traditional genre forms through such practices as parody or even downright deconstruction of Hollywood storytelling norms. For example, the Western was revised by new approaches that either emphasized political subject matter occluded in the traditional boosterist mythology of the genre or that mocked traditional form through comedy and satire (as in Mel Brooks's *Blazing Saddles*). But Cook is careful to show how such a freedom in the realm of genre experimentation itself needs to be understand as being caught up in questions of political economy. For instance, parodic revision of classic genres could help rejuvenate those genres as newly saleable commodities, attractive in their hip, self-reflexive knowingness. In

fact, as Cook's central thesis of the blurring of B-movie content and big-budget prestige treatment in the blockbusters of the 1970s emphasizes, even the mainstream successes of the period (for example, *Star Wars*) themselves frequently incorporated a degree of ironic self-consciousness, a recognition by their makers that such films could best achieve financial success by reveling in their lack of serious message, in their desire to turn cinema into evident, explicit game.

Significantly, despite what one senses as Cook's own auteurism and nostalgia for that first part of the 1970s, when American filmmaking pushed the envelope of political, sexual, and cultural representations, his book is finally about the perfections of a system that learned how to incorporate the most commercial aspects of cutting-edge work and refashion cynicism into salability.

In keeping with the theme of auteurs and system (their tension but also their interaction), *Lost Illusions* is structured around chapters on specific directorial careers and on the business of film (with a chronology that makes its argument by dealing early on with auteurs and then later with the studio system and new players, such as agents). The earliest sections of the volume set the terms of the narrative by offering overviews of "formative industry trends" and the ways these coalesced through the course of the decade into an obsession with the heavily marketed, heavily distributed blockbuster film. This introduction is followed by a very extensive discussion of individual auteurs (both those who survived and those who could not work well with the evolving rules of the game). One of the most interesting—and perhaps ironic—aspects of this analysis has to do with Cook's pinpointing of how decisive 1950s television was in the formation of numerous 1970s auteurs, such as Arthur Penn or Sidney Lumet. The point becomes ironic insofar as these auteurs called upon their experience in Golden Age television drama in order to give their films a gritty maturity, only to find this giving way to a very different televisualization of the film industry at the end of the decade, in which television's *levitas* rather than its *gravitas* became the model to emulate. For an auteurism centered on the vibrant and probing innovation of the early 1970s, is there any irony sadder than the narrative of a director like Arthur Penn, who disappears from the late 1970s only to resurface with television-inspired, seemingly high-concept but ultimately failed films like *Penn and Teller Get Killed*? (It is then another ironic wrinkle in the story that Penn has now returned to television as a producer of gritty crime drama.)

Complementing the analyses of the ways individual auteurs innovated cinematic form, subsequent chapters examine the widespread reworking of genre in both mainstream and marginal feature-film forms in the decade. Cook moves carefully through each of the established genres and shows the extent to which they became pretexts for elaborate (and frequently highly critical) revisionism. After sections on the companies and the players in the New Hollywood (with special attention to the agent as a new player in the biz), Cook's own discussion ends with a marvelous chapter on technological developments in the 1970s. Although it is often quite detailed and technical, this chapter, interestingly enough, bears a close connection to the political economy of the earlier chapters, insofar as many of the new technologies (large-screen format, enveloping sound, subtly mixed soundtracks) derive in large part from an industry sense that for a blockbuster the visual and aural spectacle of film, its total surround of the spectator, matter as much as narrative strength. And in keeping with Cook's general impressive ability to marshal facts and figures to give his analyses richness and reach, the volume ends with a series of useful appendices: figures on annual box-office receipts, attendance trends, evolution of ticket price, profits and market shares of the key industry players, major award winners, and so on.

If I have any reservation about *Lost Illusions,* it is one that I would direct against the whole of the Scribner's series and that evidently comes from the very conceptual framework that drives the volumes. Namely, it seems to me that in the desires to exploit archival material and documents of industry self-representation and to deal primarily with that which can be known positively about the industry and its products, the volumes tend to downplay more interpretative realms of historical investigation. In particular, the fear that cultural and social mediations can't be "proven" leads the volumes generally to eschew any theorization or suggestion of such mediations per se. Social history recedes into a shadowy background and moves to the foreground only in those cases where it directly and concretely impinges on the policies and operations of the film industry. Despite its subtitle, Cook's brilliant book is only indirectly about political events such as the Vietnam War or Watergate; it gives us solid film history, and no doubt it would be hard to be as solid in suppositions about the mediations between sociocultural trends and film form and meaning. It is likely that the very desire on the part of the series editor and advisers to constitute the essential reference history of American film led to an emphasis on the verifiable, rather than the hypothetical. But this does have the effect of leading the volumes in the series simultaneously to suggest that American film is important (after all, why devote ten volumes to its history) and to make it seem that its importance lies primarily in direct effects of policy decisions, industrial development, and so on, rather than in film's place in the culture.

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Mainly About Lindsay Anderson

By Gavin Lambert. New York, Knopf, 2000. $29.95.

When first approached, shortly after the death of British filmmaker and stage director Lindsay Anderson, to write Anderson's biography, Gavin Lambert—author, novelist, screenwriter, and Anderson's lifelong friend—hesitated, out of fear he would not be objective enough. In the midst of his doubts, however, Lambert recalled Anderson's own book, *About John Ford,* which, while predominantly a critical history and

analysis of Ford's films, is also a chronicle of the friendship Anderson developed with the older filmmaker during a number of meetings over 22 years. Lambert decided to write a similar, albeit more explicitly biographical, dual portrait of himself and Anderson. Its title derived from Anderson's book, *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson* is the result.

In the execution, Lambert's concerns about lack of objectivity prove to be unwarranted; his account of Anderson's enterprises, triumphs, and frustrations is engaging, warm, and even-handed, sympathetic without being maudlin or fawning. He presents Anderson as a challenging but loyal friend and as an artist of singular integrity; a man, as his longterm stage collaborator, David Storey, described him, "'with a set of values seemingly in place since birth'" (6). These values included a belief, influenced by John Ford's work, that art should be both personal and poetic; a conviction that the artist should be an activist for social change; "a mistrust of institutions and an anachronistic belief in the importance of the individual to make his or her decisions about life—rather than simply to accept tradition and the institutional philosophy" (191); and a hope for—and belief in the possibility of—a social democratic solution to the inequities of British society.

These were the values that guided and informed all of Anderson's work: his extensive writing on film, particularly as a young man; his work as a stage director; his early documentary shorts, which—together with those of his fellow documentary filmmakers Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz, and Lorenza Mazzetti—he promoted under the banner of the British Free Cinema movement; his first feature, *This Sporting Life* (1963), which was his sole contribution to the short-lived British New Wave of the early 1960s; and the short films, television movies, and feature films he directed over the next 30 years, the most celebrated being his satirical trilogy *If . . .* (1968), *O Lucky Man!* (1973), and *Britannia Hospital* (1982). Anderson's films were critically acclaimed, but they often incurred the acrimony of British officials and were not generally commercial successes. This, together with his reputation as a "difficult" director unwilling to compromise his artistic integrity, led to difficulty in getting film projects produced. To his growing frustration, he directed only six feature films in a 30-year career. In contrast, he worked consistently and successfully as a stage director—most often in London but also on occasion on Broadway—and directed over 30 plays between 1957 and 1992.

Lambert provides comprehensive descriptions and analyses of Anderson's feature and television films and of his significant shorts and documentaries, as well as those stage plays he had the opportunity to see. In this endeavor, Lambert exhibits an intelligent and fine-honed critical efficiency. While generally admiring Anderson's work, Lambert pinpoints weaknesses as well, such as an unsuitably solid literalness in Anderson's staging of Chekhov or a "reaching for style" in *This Sporting Life* that comes across as overdone. His judgments of Anderson's work are consistently insightful, reflecting his early work as a film critic as well as the creative and cinematic sensibility he developed in his years as a novelist and screenwriter.

Indeed, because this book has two subjects, Lambert intersperses his account of Anderson's life and work with his own story: his life as an émigré in Los Angeles, his experiences writing for television and the screen, the attachments he formed in his life. Lambert's choice to provide this dual portrait is not without its problems. For one, the book is not a complete biography (or autobiography) of either man; the accounts of both lives are at times somewhat sketchy. More significantly, Lambert's blend of approaches to the material produces, perhaps unavoidably, a more vibrant and immediate portrait of Lambert than of Anderson.

This is largely the result of Lambert's account of the two men's lives after 1956, the year in which Lambert left England for the United States. In the years since, except for short stays in Rome and Paris, he has made his home in either Tangier, where he lived from 1973 to 1988, or Los Angeles. In contrast, Anderson lived his entire adult life in London, and the two maintained their friendship via correspondence, telephone conversations, and periodic visits. Thus Lambert's own story takes the form of autobiography, but, as he acknowledges from the outset, his account of Anderson's life after 1956 is largely biography. Moreover, in the autobiography, Lambert shifts at times into an almost schoolgirlish account of several of his love affairs, and the lushly romantic note he hits at these moments seems out of keeping with the intelligently engaged yet measured voice of the rest of the book, causing a slight dissonance, a slight discomfort on the part of the reader, as if he or she were suddenly intruding upon Lambert's privacy.

Ultimately, however, Lambert's dual portrait serves as a structural reflection of the theme of duality that runs through the book in several forms. One such duality was the contradictory, Jekyll-and-Hyde split in personality that friends and acquaintances perceived in Anderson: he was at once a rebel and a traditionalist; stoic yet sentimental; warm and generous and yet vituperative and acerbic. A second, more significant duality existed between the façade that Anderson presented to the world and the person he in fact was. At times inwardly insecure, he was consistently lonely and relentlessly self-critical. His public persona, however, fueled by a fierce pride, was so self-assured that he was perceived by some as arrogant and "a cold-eyed intellectual" (289). Despite his desire for close human relationships, he kept everyone at a distance, never discussing, even with his closest friends, private matters in his life. Indeed, despite their 55-year friendship, it was only from reading Anderson's diary after his death that Lambert learned the full extent of this dark underside of Anderson's personality, of the doubts, the harsh self-judgment, and the profound loneliness.

Most poignant and lethal, however, is the third duality, which Lambert's self-portrait so vividly illustrates: the difference between the life Anderson lived and the life he could have had. Both men were born at a time in which the prevailing view in England was that homosexuality was a sign of moral depravity or a disease requiring cure, and in practice it was a crime that was prosecuted regularly. Lambert, however, had already adjusted himself to a homosexual fu-

ture by the time he met Anderson at public school, having been initiated by a teacher at his preparatory school at the age of eleven, an experience that he describes as his first love affair and that he claims engendered in him not shame or fear but gratitude. Even if the reader can take Lambert at his word on this, his comfort with his homosexuality did not come without a price; it appears that, even as a child, he recognized himself as an outsider, an exile no matter where he lived, the possessor of a "solitude of the heart" (273). Nonetheless, it was largely this sense of displacement that, in rendering Lambert indifferent to the judgments of a society from which he felt excluded from childhood, granted him the ease in his own identity that he reflects here, for instance, in his openly emotional account of his love affairs.

In contrast, Anderson seems to have internalized the prevailing British view of homosexuality to such a degree that he never got over his horror at discovering his own sexual inclinations. As a result, he lived such a severely closeted life that not only was he unable to disclose his homosexuality to his friends, but apparently he never acted upon it in any way; instead, he repressed all sexual urges his entire life and never enjoyed a reciprocal love relationship. Rather, he spent his life repeating the same sad pattern: falling in love with attractive, unattainable, often heterosexual young men, who were frequently married as well. Some of them seemed to recognize Anderson's attraction and to use it to their advantage; again and again, Anderson, who confessed in his diaries to certain masochistic fantasies, found himself "playing a third" to these young men and their girlfriends or wives.

By Lambert's account, Anderson's unhappy personal life had minimal negative effect on his work, in part because the basic duality in Anderson's nature enabled him to flourish publicly despite internal pain or despair, but more significantly because Anderson's artistic endeavors offered him the fulfillment he never found in his personal life. Nonetheless, Lambert perceives the romantic image in *If* . . . of a younger student's lingering to admire an older student's acrobatics as an instance of Anderson's "working unusually close to his subconscious" (169). Lambert also attributes Richard Harris's Oscar-nominated performance in *This Sporting Life* to Anderson's one-sided love affair with him during filming: "A director in love with his leading actress or actor connects with the beloved on a deep subconscious level, and the visual intimacy of movies always reveals it. . . . [T]he camera mirrors everything in the beloved that attracts and obsesses [the director], and in movies for other directors, the actor never reaches quite the same intensity" (120). At the same time, however, Lambert argues that Anderson's intense identification with Rachel Roberts's fiercely grieving widow, a woman incapable of emotional intimacy, undercut the film's effectiveness by depriving her of a humanizing vulnerability and thus giving the couple's relationship a heavy-handedness that the story could not legitimately sustain.

The book concludes aptly with an afterword entitled "In Celebration," in which a number of Anderson's friends recount their memories of him, a reminder that, even as there was much to regret in his life, there was much to celebrate as well. Further, even in the contemplation of the ineffable sadness underlying his life, Lambert's book is, in effect, a tribute to Anderson, who always believed artists should be activists. Without resort to soapbox or didacticism, but simply through the honesty of its telling, Lambert's account of Anderson's life serves as a standing indictment of a repressive system which, like a sort of psychic foot-binding, taught certain of its citizens to thoroughly and devastatingly reject and distort their natural selves; a repressive system against which Anderson rebelled his entire life without, ultimately, being able to rebel against it in this one crucial regard. Even so, whatever else it has to tell us, *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson* is mainly a loving yet unsentimental appreciation of the man and the artist by which—despite his initial trepidations and, indeed, probably because of his closeness to the subject matter—Lambert has done his old friend proud.

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An Open Window

The Cinema of Víctor Erice

Edited by Linda C. Ehrlich. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000. $55.00.

Linda Ehrlich's *An Open Window: The Cinema of Víctor Erice* is the first monograph in English on one of Spain's most important filmmakers. Erice has directed only three feature-length movies—*The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), *The South* (1982), and *Dream of Light* (a.k.a. *The Quince Tree Sun,* 1992). However, because of the haunting quality of these films and the ten-year hiatus between each one, his reputation in Spain has gained an almost mythic status. This anthology should help to boost Erice's reputation in the United States. *An Open Window* contains reprints of pieces written in English and in translation from Spanish and Japanese critics, together with some original essays. The collection of essays focuses on both individual films and on Erice's work as a whole, and it offers interviews with the director, examples of his writings on cinema, and brief film reviews.

Ehrlich's introductory essay gives an overview of Erice's films, anticipating the other essays as well as incorporating views from much of the published criticism on them. Her interview with Erice provides valuable insights into his filmmaking and into the films themselves, which he believes are characterized by "a search for knowledge." Excerpts from Carmen Arocena's book on Erice show the director's adherence to critical realism—he defines film as a "social act"; she also notes the "opposition between reality and ideals" that is a constant in his films.

Spanish critics consider *The Spirit of the Beehive* one of Spain's most important films. It portrays the life of a family in a village following the Spanish Civil War, with a remarkable debut performance by child actress Ana Torrent. Erice makes use of the Frankenstein myth through intertextual references to the James Whale film. Fernando Savater offers a

philosophical examination of the nature of the monster's deformity and how both Ana and we relate to the monster who has no voice and who is eternally pursued. The metaphorical monsters in the film are the victims of Franco, and Erice's film is therefore a "staunch allegation against fascism." Luis Arata discusses Ana's use of imagination while playing and notes that "Ana's play becomes a process of exploration, of self-discovery, of self-creation." Miguel Angel Lomillos analyzes the parental estrangement in *The Spirit of the Beehive* that is governed by a "poetics of absence": those who lost the war were condemned to an inner exile in which interpersonal relationships were truncated.

Erice's second film, *The South,* is based on a novella of the same name by Adelaida García Morales. The major controversy surrounding *The South* concerns the fact that the film's producer cut short the filming, and Erice consequently believes that his work is unfinished. Angel Fernández-Santos's "Thirty-Three Scholarly Questions" about the film provides insights into what might have been. As someone close to the director (he was co-scriptwriter for *The Spirit of the Beehive*), he was understandably frustrated over the truncation of the project. This essay seems to be a venting of that frustration, but many critics consider the film's open ending to be consonant with the mysterious, poetic tone of the work as a whole. Peter Evans and Robin Fiddian give an excellent close reading of *The South* within the context of Erice's use of narrative form, questions of gender, and the intertextuality between this and other narratives. Antonio Santos examines the novella and its relation to the film; his emphasis is more on the former, however, and there can be some confusion for those who are not familiar with both texts.

Dream of Light won the 1992 International Critics' Prize and the Jury Prize at Cannes. It is an unusual film that borders the documentary genre as it records how artist Antonio López paints a quince tree in his patio. William Johnson's review notes how López's private life, in contrast to that of other artists whose lives have been brought to the screen, is undramatic, yet "Erice's meditative appraisal of this unlikely hero generates an extraordinary sense of wonder." Paul Julian Smith argues that Erice is "the quintessential auteur filmmaker" whose work is "art cinema in its purest form"; he notes that *Dream of Light,* Erice's "most reflexive commentary yet on the nature of representation" is also his most historical film, since the radio and television newscasts, as well as the presence of Polish workers and Chinese visitors, link the artist's studio to the outside world and become testimony to "the new cosmopolitanism of Spain." Linda Ehrlich's essay situates *Dream of Light* in the tradition of Spanish still life painting, noting that in Antonio López's painting "the patient accumulation of . . . cinematic images . . . like the seemingly mundane images in Zurbarán's painting, allows us to ponder the sacred dimension of the human." Marsha Kinder links *Dream of Light* to another Spanish film, José Luis Guerín's *Innisfree* (1990): "Both are reflexive films that extend the exploration of representation issues to media other than cinema." She quotes Erice's contention that the film is about the "secret relationship between painting and cinema" and that his commonality with López is the dream of "the perfect capturing of light" which responds to the "ingrained need to conquer time through the perpetuity of forms; the desire to replace the external world with its double."

In the section of general essays, the contributions by Hasumi Shigehiko, Miyaoka Hideyuki, and Maeda Hideki reflect Erice's popularity in Japan. They also show the importance of time in Erice's work—and life: Shigehiko's essay on the director's unfulfilled project on Velázquez's "Las meninas" includes the turn of phrase "Erice time" to refer to his own special sense of time; and Hideki's essay applies Bergson's concept of duration to Erice's works. Dominique Russell's incisive essay on the use of sound in Erice's films builds on the concept of the "aesthetics of silence." In *The Spirit of the Beehive* this silence manifests the alienation between the parents, and for Ana, it is "a weapon to preserve her inner self." Russell states that "though music and ambient sound play an essential role in the creation of silence, it is the decentering of dialogue that sets these films apart."

Short film reviews are contributed by Johnson, Janet Maslin, Vincent Canby, Laurence Giavarini, Alain Mitjaville, Alberto Moravia, John Pym, and Phillip Strick. The monograph also contains stills from Erice's films as well as from other movies and works of art that are discussed in the book. In addition to a filmography, the selected bibliography on Erice and Spanish cinema in general is quite thorough, and lists important studies by other scholars that can provide for further reading.

Although most of the essays have already appeared in print, the strong point of *An Open Window* is that it brings them together in one volume, and it provides access for an American audience to critical writings on Erice in translation. Russell's previously unpublished essay is also an excellent addition to the volume, which will, hopefully, stimulate more interest in Erice on this side of the Atlantic. My only regret is that *The South* is not available in video with English subtitles. But perhaps this book will help change that.

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Planet Hong Kong

Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment

By David Bordwell. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. $68.50 cloth; $31.50 paper.

Hong Kong cinema has long captured the enthusiasm and love of dedicated fans from all over the world since the days of Bruce Lee's martial arts films. In the last several years, however, it has suddenly become a hot spot of serious academic study in the West. A profusion of popular introductory books aside, a number of high-quality academic monographs have been published about the history, art, and characteristics of Hong Kong cinema. Here are a few important titles:

Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute, 1997); Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema* (London: Verso, 1999); Poshek Fu and David Desser, eds., *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). *Post Script* 19.1 (Fall 1999) also published a substantial special issue on Hong Kong cinema, edited by Steve Fore. David Bordwell's new book adds to this growing list of studies on the subject.

All these recent works have their own distinct qualities and approaches. For instance, Teo offers a historical, chronological account from the beginning of Hong Kong cinema to the late 1990s; Stokes and Hoover focus on films mostly from the last 20 years and engage critical themes relevant to contemporary cultural studies; Fu and Desser's edited volume presents a comprehensive coverage of history, styles, and critical issues from the beginning all the way to the end of the twentieth century; the *Post Script* special issue selectively focuses on important aspects of Hong Kong cinema in the context of transnational cultural studies. All in all, these studies provide various angles to examine the many faces of Hong Kong cinema.

In comparison to the above works, Bordwell's book has its own characteristics and distinct flavor. The book does not set out to be an all-encompassing historical account of Hong Kong cinema. As the author states, it does not examine Hong Kong cinema as an expression of local society or of the history of Chinese culture. It is primarily a study of the poetics of Hong Kong cinema and its art of entertainment, an essayistic attempt to look at matters regarding "industry background, production practices, and above all filmic structure and style" (xi). The book does not explore the long history of Hong Kong cinema, but focuses on films mostly from the early 70s up to the present (17).

There are altogether nine chapters in the book as well as seven interludes between the chapters. The individual chapters and the interludes are not necessarily arranged in terms of chronological sequence or themes; they seem to have logics of their own. In Chapter 1, "All Too Extravagant, Too Gratuitously Wild," and the ensuing interlude, "Hong Kong and/as/or Hollywood," the author sets the tone for the rest of the book. The nature of Hong Kong cinema, one of the great success stories in world cinema, derives in part from Chinese culture and history, and more importantly resides in film art itself, in its styles and craftsmanship. In the eyes of some Western observers, popular Hong Kong cinema can be very brutal, sensationalistic, crazy, and infantile; yet it can be extremely inventive, exuberant, energetic, and creative. Bordwell compares the editing techniques of Hong Kong cinema with the standard procedures of Hollywood filmmaking (as evident in Michael Mann's *Heat*, 1995), and discusses the interflows between Hong Kong cinema and Hollywood.

Chapter 2, "Local Heroes," explores the nature of the local strategies of the Hong Kong film industry. Chapter 3, "The Chinese Connections," and Chapter 4, "Once Upon a Time in the West," discuss Hong Kong cinema's local and regional audiences and its reception in the West. The author considers the various levels of Hong Kong cinema as a local cinema, a regional cinema, a diaspora cinema, and a global cinema. Chapter 5, "Made in Hong Kong," reviews how films are made in Hong Kong—the tradition, craft, methods, and procedures. Chapter 6, "Formula, Form, and Norm," and Chapter 7, "Plots, Slack and Stretched," examine the specific characteristics of Hong Kong cinema, its ways of storytelling and editing, its stars, genres, and conventions. Chapter 8, "Motion Emotion: The Art of the Action Movie," focuses on the stylistics of Hong Kong's action film and martial arts film. Chapter 9, "Avant-Pop Cinema," probes into the tradition of so-called art film, especially the craft of Wong Kar-wai. The author suggests that even in these cases the experimental films still belong to the vein of popular entertainment.

The interludes interspersed between the chapters offer individual treatments of significant directors, actors, stars, and films. The author describes the careers and film art of Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, John Woo, Tsui Hark, Wong Jing, Zhang Che, Lau Kar-leung, King Hu, and Wong Kar-wai. In the final section, "Further Reading," Bordwell directs the reader's attention to important and useful scholarship that researchers in Hong Kong cinema might want to consult.

Readers interested in the broad issues of "cultural studies" (for the want of a better term), will be disappointed with the book. Many people might have expected from such a major study sustained in-depth inquiries in areas that are relevant to the understanding of key questions of our era: how Hong Kong cinema intervenes in the construction of local/national/global identity; how the regional/transnational flow of capital impacts filmic discourse; or how history, class, ethnicity, and gender formation are configured in the varieties of Hong Kong film genres. It is not that Bordwell's book completely ignores these questions, but many readers will find his style of analysis and formalist approach less than satisfactory in addressing such issues. The ideologies of the text and the political economy of filmic discourse lie largely outside the main concerns of the book.

But no serious student of Hong Kong cinema or popular cinema should neglect this monumental study. The weaknesses are also the great strengths of Bordwell's book. For it helps us understand and appreciate film language and film art, how and what each film means to the audience, the mechanics of filmmaking, and the differences and similarities between Hollywood and Hong Kong cinema. It grasps a vital Asian film tradition from a seasoned global and cross-cultural perspective. One sees the typical Bordwellian and painstakingly detailed frame-by-frame analysis of individual films. For instance, in clarifying the style of Hong Kong action film, he closely analyzes a sequence of as many as 18 shots of the film *Righting Wrongs* (1986), starring American actress Cynthia Rothrock (238-42). To illustrate the difference between the Hollywood "sandwich" style of shooting a scene and what he calls the "pause/burst/pause" pattern of a Hong Kong fighting scene, Bordwell patiently offers a shot-by-shot analysis of a sequence from Bruce Lee's *Way of the Dragon* (1972) (221-23). The book's insight into the

poetics of Hong Kong cinema is built on these microscopic examinations of shots, scenes, camera angles, and sequences in individual films. In Chapter 6, "Formula, Form, and Norm," Bordwell documents the accelerating tempo of Hong Kong films from the 1970s to the 1990s, and demonstrates how cutting has become faster and faster in terms of how many seconds a shot holds on average in film genres over the years. The reader has much to learn from such technical and stylistic discussions.

The book is apparently the result of labor of love. To complete this study, the author did a great amount of preliminary research, not to mention the fact that he watched more than 370 Hong Kong films (xi). His wealth of knowledge puts the native informant or any self-alleged "cultural insider" to shame. The work is written not only with great analytic rigor and erudition, but also with grace and fecund imagination. The book is, after all, what it is—a book written from a masterful Bordwellian perspective, the brainchild of one of the most energetic and cosmopolitan film scholars of our time. The accessible, vivid style of writing and abundant exciting illustrations will make the study a good textbook for large undergraduate classes on Hong Kong cinema, which has grown to be one of most attractive film courses on college campuses in the U.S.

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Sanshō Dayū

By Dudley Andrew and Carole Cavanaugh. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press/BFI Classics, 2000. $12.95.

The valuable BFI Film Classics series has produced a gem in the co-authored volume *Sanshō Dayū,* by Dudley Andrew and Carole Cavanaugh. In its brief 79 pages a particularly fruitful dialogue develops between Andrew's film analysis and the literary analysis provided by Japanologist Cavanaugh. Both writers remind us that central to story and film is the theme of survival: the survival of the original tale, of the family depicted in the story, of the film itself. Implicit in this theme is the very need to pass down legends, and Andrew and Cavanagh's beautifully nuanced conversation-in-print helps make the legend come alive again. It also reminds us of what really matters when we carry on a conversation with a great film. As stated in the preface, both writers also find in *Sanshō Dayū* a reflection of Mizoguchi's anxiety in the face of modernity.

The book opens with a map showing the geographical locales of the story of the ill-fated family of Taira no Masauji. A preface outlines the rubric for this "conversation" between scholars, and between the folk tale/short story and film as well. A short, evocative synopsis of the film follows.

Cavanaugh's particular contribution, the chapter entitled "*Sanshō Dayū* and the Overthrow of History," stresses the elements of faith and family that link all versions of this resilient tale, including the 1915 rendition in contemporary prose by Mori Ōgai, which made it available to a larger Japanese audience, and Mizoguchi's 1954 film, which opened it up for the world. Cavanaugh draws on a wide range of sources for her interpretation of story and film, including *Jōdo* (Pure Land) Buddhism, the *nō* drama, and Japanese creation myths of sibling pairs.

Ōgai (1862-1922), a military surgeon-turned-novelist, fused neo-Confucian ideals with a sense of nationalism in his fairytale-like retelling of the ancient *sekkyo-bushi* (Buddhist homily) of the aristocratic family's interaction with the tyrannical bailiff Sanshō. For example, Ōgai shows the son Zushiō's rehabilitation as his *right* in a society based on rigid social classes and on male authority. It was Mizoguchi who added the anti-military and overtly humanistic angle to the story, especially as it affected the children's struggle for self-identity as they matured. While Ōgai stressed the sense of the miraculous and the dream-like in the tale, Mizoguchi (influenced by the postwar liberal climate in Japan) focused more on the hard realities. Paradoxically, the times when the director turned the camera's eye away from explicitly showing scenes of branding and maiming only heighten the sense of terror. (On page 23, frame enlargements from two of the cruelest moments in the film are grouped together, effectively reminding us of the dark underside of Mizoguchi's vision.)

Cavanaugh perceptively points out that both men—Ōgai and Mizoguchi—approached the Sanshō legend later in their careers, while they were in their fifties. She posits a definition of melodrama influenced by Peter Brooks and Stanley Cavell, and describes Mizoguchi's addition of the father's liberal idealism in a rather minimalized way as an example of what Brooks described as "melodramatists [who] refuse to allow that the world has been completely drained of transcendence; and [who] locate that transcendence in the struggle of the children of light with the children of darkness, in the play of the ethical world" (*The Melodramatic Imagination,* 22).

Cavanaugh surmises that Ōgai's changes to the folktale might have been influenced by his knowledge of German and Scandanavian folklore. She compares the ten-year lapse in the story (as the children Anju and Zushiō mature into adolescents, seemingly overnight) to "a perverse inversion on the enchanted sleep of fairy tales" (22). One of the most magical sections of Cavanaugh's writing is her delineation of "four distinct sound threads" (vocal, natural, orchestral, and atonal) that surround the scene of the maimed mother Tamaki leaning on a cane and calling out to her dispersed children from a windy bluff on Sado Island overlooking the sea.

Andrew's contribution, the chapter entitled "Mizo Dayū," draws in connections as far-ranging as the writings of folklorist Yanagita Kunio and Gilles Deleuze. As the title implies, Mizoguchi could be a tyrant toward his staff. (In this context, more could have been said about the contributions of the long-suffering screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata.) Tyrant though he was, he was also remembered by many

who worked with him as a great teacher, in his own idiosyncratic way.

In his earlier publication, *Film in the Aura of Art,* Andrew wrote that "interpretation is a process that asserts the value of both knowledge and experience, giving precedence to neither" (13), and in his *Mists of Regret* he reminds that "As a historian, I am a spectator ready to become another spectator." His insightful analysis of *Sanshō Dayū* takes place within this framework. Calling Mizoguchi's film a "foundational" aspect of Japanese cultural history, he sees it as a call to consciousness and natural pride directed at a people struggling to rise from the rubble of World War II. "One of the first post-Occupation films to figure Japan geographically and historically, *Sanshō Dayū* must be considered a national epic or anthem" (45). Andrew views Mizoguchi's retelling as a conclusive version, a kind of "closing down of the legend" (41), and it certainly is the yardstick against which any subsequent version will have to be measured.

With his usual careful eye to visual motifs, Andrew points out Mizoguchi's use of the opposed compositional pulls of the circle and the line, especially in the director's preference for diagonal lines that compel the eye to consider offscreen space. He notes the director's command of deep-focus shots, especially in scenes of dispersion. Moving from the visual, he traces a line of critical response from Bazin to Rivette and on to Noël Burch. He notes, and questions, various allegorical interpretations of the film.

Both Cavanagh and Andrew shed light on the sense of transcendence often mentioned as a quality of this film, yet they paint a rather bleak picture of the ending scene. Cavanaugh finds Zushiō at the end of the film "an eternal stranger, nameless and lost to himself and to the world forever" (25), in contrast to the deceased Anju, whom she calls a "fixed center of meaning" (31). Noting Michel Chion's essay "Tamaki's Cry," Andrew does write that "the film concludes as a cry issuing from the 'Buddhist heart' . . . beyond all personhood"(49), yet he tends toward another interpretation, with such lines as: "Under a darkening, uncaring sky, mother and son . . . look forward precisely to nothing" (68), and "Mizoguchi cranes above history to look out on a future that is hopeless" (71). Referring to the three key scenes that take place in or near bodies of water—the kidnapping scene on the sea, Anju's suicide in the pond on Sanshō's estate, and the final scene of the seaweed gatherer—Andrew paints them as "a background of indifference that swallows human gesture" (56).

While there is certainly a marked sense of tragedy in all three of those scenes, one wonders if there is not also (at least in the latter two scenes) a turning to Nature for comfort and for a perspective that also ennobles the human gesture. Perhaps Andrew's interpretation of the ending scene of *Sanshō Dayū* is an elaboration of his earlier analysis in "The Passion of Identification in the Late Films of Kenji Mizoguchi": that the product of these late Mizoguchi films is a "full emptiness" in which we are "captive neither of the artwork . . . nor of our own construction" and where the burden for conveying emotion is given to Nature (190-92).

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Sound Technology and the American Cinema

Perception, Representation, Modernity

By James Lastra. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. $18.50.

The main title of James Lastra's study, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema,* is not completely descriptive, since the book offers only a modicum of discussion of sound technology per se and only a few sentences about specific films. No, his project is much more specific and more original: he constructs here a history of "the imagination of technology" (16), that is, of how certain media—primarily phonography and cinema, but with detours to discuss photography and telephones as well—have been understood by those most directly involved in their invention and their implementation.

For the most part, the author's method is meta-critical, in that he primarily analyzes the discourse surrounding these technologies, such as writings published by inventors, articles in popular science journals or trade publications, reviews, newspaper accounts, instructions given to theater pianists by music publishers, and the records of film-industry-sponsored courses in sound recording. The book, which is divided into six chapters (some of which have been published previously in anthologies), proceeds chronologically. Lastra starts from early inventors, not only Marey, Edison, and Alexander Graham Bell, but less familiar names such as Professor Faber (who invented a talking automaton called a Euphonia) and E. F. F. Chalni (who recorded sound vibrations on dust-covered plates). Chapter 2 concentrates on the ramifications of these inventions in terms of "the technological transformation of representational causality" (61); it discusses how audiences reacted to and understood these new sign systems. The next chapter, "Everything but the Kitchen Sync," gives a particularly clear overview of the myriad of ways that music, sound effects, and voices were used to accompany silent films. In "Sound Theory," the fourth chapter, Lastra pauses his chronology to engage with several key issues of sound theory, such as the relationship between an original sound event and its reproduction, and the tension between fidelity and intelligibility. (Lastra shows himself here to be a devastatingly logical and persuasive theorist.) The last two chapters discuss the coming-of-sound years in Hollywood (1925-1934), mainly by analyzing the publications of engineers who sought to understand how to integrate their professional standards and practices into the Hollywood studio system and a narrative context.

Lastra indicates that he has spent ten years on this study—though relatively short, the book is quite dense and not an easy read. His underlying arguments are multiple and

intertwined in complicated ways. One of his aims is to challenge "apparatus theory"—the claim, vehemently put forth in the late 70s, that the cinematic apparatus was inherently aligned with bourgeois ideology because of the way that the technology, particularly the camera lens, was designed. As Lastra argues:

> Our understandings of technology and technological representation need to be revised radically. On the one hand, we need to recognize that in spite of their apparent material intransigence, representational devices, however familiar, are neither static nor self-defining. Put more forcefully, we need to take seriously the notion that, for example, a camera in one cultural/practical/representational context is not the "same" technology as the identical device in another, and that these differences are not trivial (61).

Lastra wants us instead to put each technological *device* in the context of *discourse, practice,* and *institution* (his emphasis, 13).

For those of us who, at the time that apparatus theory was most dominant, felt bludgeoned by its sweeping generalizations, Lastra provides a cogently argued deflector shield. And while debates over this issue no longer seem so urgent (Vance Kepley's article "Whose Apparatus? Problems of Film Exhibition and History" presented a nice rebuttal in 1996, and the doctrine has lost so much steam that Robert Stam merely brushes it aside in one paragraph of his survey of *Film Theory*), Lastra provides a notably constructive and detailed alternative approach.

His own methodology is validated by his results. What Lastra finds when he surveys the discourse surrounding these technologies is an interplay between two dominant metaphors: thinking of these media as simulations of human capabilities, as extensions of human organs (as prosthetic eyes or voices or ears), and conceiving of these media as forms of writing or inscription. Lastra pulls together compelling evidence. He points out that Edison's phonograph was originally classified by observers as a talking machine, along the lines of human automata fairground attractions (the illustrations are wonderful!). Most strikingly, we learn that Bell and his brother killed a neighbor's cat to harvest its larynx for a machine, and that at another point Bell even experimented with the bones of a human ear.

Most importantly, Lastra demonstrates how ideas of sound recording as mimicking perception persisted into the transition to sound, underlying the doctrine of using sound technology to reproduce the original acoustics of the location as if an invisible listener were in the audience as the scene was being shot. However, Lastra's research shows that, on the other hand, from the mid-1800s an alternative imaginative tradition conceived of sound technology less anthropomorphically and as more analogous to writing. Thus, over time, film performances, sets, microphone design, microphone placement, mixing, and dubbing were manipulated not to mimic perception but to *construct* film soundtracks that foregrounded narrative clarity. Background sound effects that were not even present on the set were added later, the better to fabricate a naturalistic effect. In short, in the case of Hollywood, sound technologies slowly came to be understood less as superior sensory extensions and more as functional tools that could be manipulated at will.

Lastra's primary research is awe-inspiring. The book includes 40 pages of roughly 500 footnotes (which, unfortunately, are not fully covered by the index, nor does the book include a bibliography). Lastra draws evidence from sources such as *The Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution for 1867, Pacific Coast Photographer* (1894), and *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (1930),* and his coverage of secondary literature about acoustics, technology, perception, and modernity is equally impressive. Yet though it may sound churlish to ask for more footnotes, I often yearned for the author to place his arguments in the context of a larger and more diverse field of approaches to cinema studies and film sound research than those he leans upon most heavily (e.g., Altman, Gunning, Musser, Doane, Williams, Bordwell/Thompson/Staiger). For instance, the argument between the realists and the formalists, and André Bazin's "Myth of the Total Cinema" in particular, are surely relevant here. And Amy Lawrence's *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1991), in which Lawrence surveys more briefly some of the same primary sources as Lastra, is never mentioned. Interestingly, she found evidence of different metaphors and ideological undercurrents. Personally, I would love to know whether in his more thorough overview Lastra found more evidence that would be supportive (or even contradictory) to feminist approaches to sound, but he is silent on the subject.

The emotional core of *Sound Technology and the Cinema* is Lastra's sense that photography, phonography, and cinema all present a cultural crisis of the "non-human." He shows that in the face of the threat posed by such media, several competing responses were possible: not only to understand the media as extensions of human bodies, but in some cases to understand our bodies through technological metaphors. (One can have a "photographic memory," or, conversely, as was said to me last night, one may be forgetful "because your hard disk has crashed too many times.") In a particularly impressive section, Lastra summarizes how the arrival of these media has changed our conceptions of the physical world and influenced both our aesthetics and our science in terms of the importance of the fugitive and accidental (45-60). Overall, Lastra leads us to consider the complexities engendered by our awesome technological innovations and the myriad ways we struggle to come to terms with them and yet preserve our humanity. In a time where the fabric of our lives is being rewritten daily by the digital revolution, his study is a valuable—indeed essential—contribution.

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